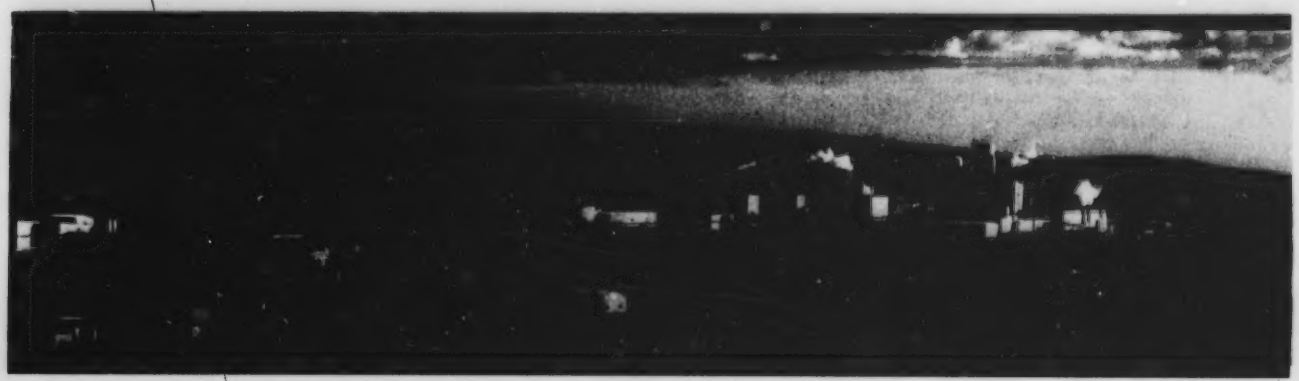
Monitoring Community Sustainability in the Foothills Model Forest: A Social Indicators Approach



by

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Information Report M-X-211E

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102-04359/

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2001

• Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada 2001

ISSN: 1195-3799
ISBN: 0-662-30819-0
Cat. No.: Fo46-19/211E

Additional copies of this publication are available in limited quantities at no charge from:

NRCan, Canadian Forest Service - Atlantic Forestry Centre
P.O. Box 4000
Fredericton, N.B. Canada E3B 5P7
Tel. : (506) 452-3500
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Editing, design, and layout : C.M. Simpson
Cover photograph courtesy of John Parkins, Canadian Forest Service - Northern Forestry Centre

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Parkins, John, 1967-.

Monitoring community sustainability in the Foothills Model Forest: a social indicators approach.

(Information Report ; M-X-211E)
Issued also in French under title : Suivi de la durabilité des collectivités dans la Forêt modèle de Foothills, d'après des indicateurs sociaux.

ISBN 0-662-30819-2
Cat. no. Fo46-19/211E

1. Sustainable forestry -- Alberta -- Foothills Model Forest.
2. Forest management -- Alberta -- Foothills Model Forest.
3. Foothills Model Forest -- Economic conditions.
4. Foothills Model Forest -- Social conditions.
5. Social indicators.
I. Beckley, T.M. (Thomas Mark), 1961- .
II. Atlantic Forestry Centre.
III. Series: Information Report (Atlantic Forestry Centre) ; M-X-211E.
IV. Title.

SD387.F37 2001 333.75'16'097123 C2001-980236-6

The Foothills Model Forest

The Foothills Model Forest is one of eleven Model Forests that make up the Canadian Model Forest Network. The Foothills Model Forest is located in Hinton, Alberta and is a non-profit corporation representing a wide array of industrial, academic, government, and non-government partners. The three principal partners/sponsors representing the agencies with vested management authority for the lands that comprise the Foothills Model Forest include Weldwood of Canada Limited (Hinton Division), the Alberta Department of Environmental Protection, and Jasper National Park. The Model Forest lands encompass a combined area of more than 2.75 million hectares under active resource management.

The Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada is also a principal partner in each of the eleven Model Forest organizations and provides the primary funding and administrative support to Canada's Model Forest Program.

The Foothills Model Forest is a unique community of partners dedicated to providing practical solutions for stewardship and sustainability of our forest lands.

La forêt modèle de Foothills

La forêt modèle de Foothills est l'une des onze forêts formant le réseau canadien des forêts modèles. Basée à Hinton en Alberta, la forêt modèle de Foothills est une corporation à but non lucratif représentant une large gamme de partenaires provenant des milieux industriels, éducatifs, universitaires et gouvernementaux. Les trois principaux partenaires ou commanditaires qui détiennent une responsabilité sur l'aménagement des terres comprises dans le territoire de la forêt modèle sont Weldwood of Canada Ltd. (Division de Hinton), le ministère de la protection de l'environnement de l'Alberta et le parc national de Jasper. Les terres de la forêt modèle s'étendent sur plus de 2,75 millions d'hectares faisant l'objet d'un aménagement actif.

Le Service canadien des forêts de Ressources naturelles Canada est également partenaire principal de chacune des onze forêts modèles, et il fournit l'essentiel du financement et de l'appui administratif au programme des forêts modèles du Canada.

La forêt modèle de Foothills est un partenariat extraordinaire devoué à fournir des solutions pratiques envers la gestion durable de nos forêts.

Disclaimer

The views, statements, and conclusions expressed and the recommendations made in this report are entirely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as statements or conlusions of, or as expressing the opinions of, the Canadian Forest Service, the Foothills Model Forest, or the partners/sponsors of the Foothills Model Forest. The exclusion of certain manufactured products does not necessarily imply disapproval nor does the mention of other products imply endorsement by the Canadian Forest Service, the Foothills Model Forest, or the partners/sponsors of the Foothills Model Forest.

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Chapter 1.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The 20th Century witnessed unprecedented population growth. Over the past 70 years, the global human population has ballooned almost 200% from 2 billion to more than 6 billion. Accompanying this swelling population are unprecedented changes in the conditions in which humans live and in the way society provides for basic human needs. On the positive side, we have witnessed declining mortality, mass literacy, and the development of a dominant middle class. On the negative side, rising crime, economic disparity, military expansion, and environmental and cultural decay represent some of the darker elements of the 20th Century. Like never before, the mass consumer society is placing heavy demands on global resources, resources often far removed from the people who use them. As a resource-rich country, Canada plays a central role in providing the world with raw materials and much of our national economy remains closely connected to resource industries such as oil and gas, mining, and forestry. Because of the fundamental role which natural resources play in our national economy, and our global position as resource provider, the relationship between human well-being and natural resource management is fundamental to Canadian society.

Moving into the 21st Century, questions about human use and human impact are entering new areas of public discourse, not the least of which is the ecological problem of environmental and economic sustainability. One can observe this interest in human factors among popular writers who explore the future of society and the economy. Best-selling books such as *Boom, Bust, Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift* (Foot and Stoffman, 1997), *Megatrends 2000* (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1996), and *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (Kennedy, 1993) speculate on social change in the years ahead as the changing conditions of mass society translate into changing buying patterns and shifting sectors of prosperity and decline. Futurists like John Naisbitt have made a fortune by interpreting and predicting change in human populations from one decade to the next. The general message from these writers is one of potential future prosperity if analysts get the interpretation of demographic data correct. Indeed, many investors try to cash in on this information and well-poised financial companies offer investment instruments governed by the principle mechanisms of demography. For instance, the *North American Demographic Fund* uses demography as a tool to identify growth opportunities and is managed based on the premise that changes in demographics greatly influence the long-term success or failure of many North American companies (Globefund, 1998).

Critics argue that the ability to predict future trends and events is much more difficult than these authors and financial companies would suggest. The harsh reality is that seemingly infinite variables can be included in predictive demographic models requiring data that are often unavailable or inherently unreliable. Numerous unforseen events such as global economic recessions also hamper accurate predictions. In the end, popular writers using simple demographic models to predict the future get it wrong as often as they get it right. All the same, with the sheer size and mobility of the global human population, and the growing scientific capability to monitor and predict everything from migration patterns to buying patterns, demographic analysis is becoming a powerful tool for investors, policy makers, municipal leaders, and anyone interested in the interplay between the economy, the natural environment, and human populations.

In the analysis of the size, structure, and development of human populations in the Foothills Model Forest, we tap into this fundamental relationship between human well-being and natural resource management. By using a social indicators research framework, we use basic demographic data from Statistics Canada census profiles along with interviews with residents of the Foothills Model Forest to paint a picture about the sustainability of these forest-based communities. In doing so, we hope to understand more about the current state of community sustainability, but we also hope to provide insights into how these communities can become more sustainable and, therefore, exist in greater harmony with the forest ecosystem.

1.2 Description of the Study Site

This study reviews socio-demographic information for three jurisdictions within the Foothills Model Forest. The Foothills Model Forest is a 2.75 million-hectare area of land in west central Alberta. Despite its enormous size, the Model Forest contains only a few communities. The most prominent of these is Hinton. Hinton is located about 285 km west of Edmonton and less than 40 km from the eastern boundary of Jasper National Park. Hinton is a diversified, resource-dependent community. Many of its 10,000 residents live in households that depend directly or indirectly on employment in nearby coal mines and timber-processing facilities (an integrated sawmill and pulp mill operation owned by Weldwood of Canada, Ltd.).

The second community in our analysis is Jasper townsite. Jasper currently is home to some 3600 permanent residents, although the population swells significantly during the summer tourist season. Because of the huge influx of visitors in the summer, Jasper has a rather strange infrastructure and retail base (dozens of souvenir shops and no hardware store).

The town of Hinton grew around the boreal timber resource and the pulp mill, which was established in 1956. Prior to the 1950s, Hinton was a railroad stopover point. It was an unincorporated area before to mill was constructed. As such, its population was not recorded in the census, but it was less than 1000 when mill construction began. In the early part of the 20th Century, the region surrounding Hinton was dotted with several larger towns associated with the Coal Branch. Among these were Cadomin, Mountain Park, and Pocahontas.

Hinton grew dramatically after the construction of the pulp mill in the late 1950s. As it grew, it became the regional service center. Populations in the Coal Branch towns waned as manual labor in that industry was replaced by machines. Once the transportation infrastructure allowed for commuting to the mines from Hinton, many of those employed in the Coal Branch towns chose to live in this growing town on the main highway and rail line. By the late 1960s, Hinton had become the predominant service center for the large, but sparsely populated region between Edson and Jasper. Today, the vast majority of miners are bused in or drive in to the mines from their homes in Hinton.

For years, the railroad was the only way to access Hinton. Once the mill was built, continual improvements to additional transportation infrastructure contributed to Hinton's growth. Hinton straddles Highway # 16, the only highway heading directly west into Jasper National Park and the townsite of Jasper. Thus, Hinton's soubriquet is "Gateway to the Rockies." Although Hinton's character and traditional economic base have centered on resource extraction, there has always been some attempt to divert a few dollars into the local economy from tourists on their way to Jasper.

Jasper has a considerably longer and more storied history than Hinton. It too is situated on the rail line and the townsite owes its origins to that industry. The railroad has remained an important employer in Jasper to this day. However, once the area was declared a National Park in 1907, the character and development of the town followed a distinctly different trajectory than did Hinton, its nearest neighbor to the east.

Up until 1910, the only "towns" in the vicinity of the current townsite were ramshackle tent cities with less than a hundred residents. Sanitation was a problem, and there was little organization. The current townsite was surveyed in 1914; soon after, a few stores and businesses located in the area. Many of the residents continued to live in tents in or near the current townsite, but eventually the community built up around the railroad facility and retail outlets. By the 1930s, Jasper was a bonafide community (Gainer 1981).

There was no all-weather road to Jasper until 1951 (Highway 16) and thus the only link to the townsite until that time was by rail. As well, the Banff-Jasper highway was upgraded throughout the 1950s and 1960s from a single lane gravel road to more or less its current, paved, two-lane, all-weather status (Gadd 1995). These infrastructural improvements and the continuous expansions of Jasper Park Lodge and other recreational facilities in and around the townsite were the main contributors to the growth of the community throughout the second half of the 20th Century. The railroad continues to employ significant numbers to this day and provides a modicum of diversity in the employment base of the community, but much of the town's current employment is tied directly (hotels, restaurants, retailers, guiding) or indirectly (through federal civil service Parks employees and term employees) to tourist services.

The third jurisdiction included in this study is YH94. YH94 represents the rural region that surrounds Hinton. It contains several smaller villages and settlements such as Marlboro, Brule, Mountain Park, and Robb. None of these places are incorporated and most have almost no services. Hinton and/or Edson, another regional center located just outside the

Model Forest boundaries provide most services to the rural residents of YH94. This jurisdiction is one for which Statistics Canada provides census data and, given that it represents the vast majority of the land area and more than a third of the population base of the Model Forest, we include it in the analysis of secondary data. We also interviewed a few residents of these outlying communities as well as owners of homes in open country; however, we include these in the narratives related to Hinton, as most identify Hinton as their community as well.

The analysis of the narrative, qualitative data treats Hinton and Jasper as the two main and distinct human communities of the Foothills Model Forest. Hinton has grown by a factor of 10 since the arrival of industrial forestry in the 1950s. In many ways, it is a classic, resource-extractive community and therefore represents "modernism" in a rural, extractive periphery. Fordist production principles, and unique social structures that are associated with that form of community (unions, large corporations, etc) are evident there.

As the railroad fades in importance and the retail sector continues to grow, one could accurately characterize Jasper as a "post-modern" rural community. This, of course, contrasts nicely with Hinton. The economy of Jasper is based more upon visitors "consuming the landscape" than on the production and export of goods or commodities derived from the landscape. These two different economic bases lead to fundamental differences in the outlook, views, and self-perception of community residents. It leads to different interpretations of what sustainability means to these places. The narrative data presented later will document some of these contrasts.

1.3 What are Social Indicators?

This report serves as a vehicle for reporting social indicators of community sustainability in the Foothills Model Forest. Social indicators in the context of the Foothills Model Forest can be defined as an integrated set of measures related to the social and economic well-being of human populations living within a forest ecosystem. Social indicators are statistics that can be collected over time and used for policy and management (Force and Machlis, 1997). The general goal is to establish baseline data that can be incorporated into decision-support systems and to use the data as a basis for future comparison across time and between regions. In the tradition of demography, social indicators provide essential information about human populations such as education levels, economic activity, migration patterns, and employment rates. At a comprehensive level, social indicators provide an assessment of human populations that includes measures with economic, cultural, and social relevance according to specific spatial scales, such as a community or a province. These indicators measure phenomena in smaller spatial scales than common indicators reported in the public media. For instance, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a social indicator of national economic output and is often expressed as GDP per capita. This is a popular measure of general national performance but it doesn't provide much information about regional economic performance and community well-being. Social indicators as defined here seek to remedy this typical problem of scale. According to Hart (1998):

> An indicator is something that helps you understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be. A good indicator alerts you to a problem before it gets too bad and helps you recognize what needs to be done to fix the problem. Indicators of a sustainable community point to areas where the links between the economy, environment and society are weak. They allow you to see where the problem areas are and help show the way to fix those problems....Because sustainability requires a more integrated view of the world, the indicators should link the economy, environment and society of the community.

Hart refers to the links between various dimensions of community sustainability and the potential for these indicators to act as early warning systems. At a minimum, social indicators allow a broad range of interest groups to realize how society is organized and to begin drawing connections between economy, society, and the natural environment – factors of sustainability that are often treated as separate and independent dimensions. At best, social indicators can help communities identify areas of strength and weakness and lead to policy decisions that will foster more sustainable communities.

Although community-level social indicator initiatives are relatively uncommon, there is a growing recognition (Hodge, 1997) of the value of social indicators as a measure of progress toward community sustainability. From the experience of previous successful indicator initiatives, some consensus is emerging on how social indicators should be organized and reported. The required data should be collected at regular intervals (1 to 5 years) from available data sources such as

Statistics Canada and municipal records and fed into the decision-making framework of local managers, community leaders, and other concerned groups. In addition, social indicators must be considered as a consolidated or integrated set of measures. No single indicator such as *unemployment* can provide adequate information to assess community well-being. To be most effective, social indicators must be viewed in relation to each other, must be repeatedly collected, and must capture multiple dimensions of the human community, such as social, economic, and human ecological concerns (Force and Machlis, 1997).

1.4 Social Indicators and Forest Management

Demography, as a statistical study of human populations, has a long tradition within some areas of professional management such as the insurance industry, where actuarial tables are generated to set premium rates based on mortality and fertility within the general population. Such models are not so common in other industries. Although the management of forested areas in Canada has focused historically on the development of systems to monitor adequate regeneration of the forest and the effects of forest practices on flora and fauna, little effort goes into monitoring the health and well-being of human populations living in or depending on the forest. This is beginning to change. More and more forest managers and community leaders are recognizing the need to at least monitor some changes relevant to the sustainability of human communities in relation to the surrounding natural resource base. At least three distinct movements are driving relatively recent efforts to define and monitor the health and well-being of communities as integral components of the forest ecosystem. The first is the boom in global populations and the proliferation of global economic activity. Underlying the popularized versions of demographic shifts noted earlier in some best-selling books, there exists the serious issue of mass consumer society in a finite world of resources. The science of demography, with improvements in data and predictive modelling, is providing new insights into human dimensions of global change. As a result, these demographic tools are becoming more important policy tools for planning and management in all sectors of society.

The second movement driving the development of community-level social indicators is the growing push for sustainable development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) popularized the concept of sustainable development. In the wake of its report, many efforts to assess social, economic, and ecological health and well-being were conducted using the language of sustainability. The past decade has seen a tremendous growth in interest in the concept of sustainability. Many efforts are underway to develop and monitor sustainable indicators. Social and political pressure to deliver hard evidence that progress toward sustainability is being achieved is forcing various groups to first define, and then monitor measures of sustainability. Some of these efforts focus on different scales of socio-political jurisdictions such as the *Human Development Index* (UNDP, 1998) published yearly by the United Nations that provides a nation-to-nation basis of comparison. Other efforts focus on provincial and community-level measures of sustainability such as the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers initiative called *Criteria and Indicators* (CCFM, 1997) which is designed to monitor the environmental, social, and economic aspects of forestry management in Canada. Although some critics suggest the concept of sustainability is nothing more than a buzzword or window-dressing for the status quo, it is clear that advocates for sustainable development have inspired some effort to monitor the well-being of human communities within the realm of natural resource management.

The third movement driving efforts to define and monitor the well-being of forest-sector-dependent communities is the ecosystem-based approach to forest management. Definitions of ecosystem management are often as varied as contemporary forest management practices but some approaches are beginning to "focus on similar goals such as restoring and maintaining ecosystem processes and functions, providing goods and services within ecosystem capabilities, and considering humans an integral component of ecosystems" (Allen, 1997). *Ecosystem management* is the successor to a less complex model of forest management that is often referred to as *sustainable yield management*. Although the sustainable yield approach made a direct connection between a stable timber supply and stable human communities, the ecosystem approach demands a more sophisticated and dynamic analysis of factors contributing to sustainable development that include environmental integrity, social capital, community values, and financial flows. In essence, ecosystem management requires more data—more varied and more detailed. It requires knowledge of flora and fauna, as well as an understanding of social and economic systems and their links with bio-physical systems (Allen, 1997).

These three movements then—demography, sustainable development, and ecosystem management—provided the necessary catalyst for the current interest and concern for monitoring human and community well-being within the realm of contemporary forest management practices. Although in some ways tracking basic demographic trends is a long tradition

in Canada, with regular census of the Canadian population beginning in 1871, the important link between human populations and the ecosystem in which they live and prosper is only now being studied in greater detail. This report results from these specific intellectual movements and adds to a growing body of knowledge that examines the links between human populations and forest management.

1.5 Choosing Social Indicators

Once the decision is made to include social indicators in information systems in the public and private sector, the question of choosing appropriate indicators becomes a serious consideration. Beckley and Burkosky (1999) recently surveyed published literature on indicator approaches to monitoring community sustainability. They examined 22 separate initiatives ranging in complexity and spatial scale, from municipal projects to the United Nations, and produced a matrix of indicators with the following broad categories: employment, income, economic profiles, population, education, health, social pathologies, community cohesion, women, race, decision-making, and natural resource use. Within these broad indicator categories, the authors recorded more than 85 different indicators employed to measure specific dimensions of the broader categories. For instance, researchers used a range of tools to measure the population variable. These included population distribution, net migration, median age, and birthrate per capita to gain some specific understanding of population change in the target region. Some indicators such as unemployment and income were used frequently while other measures such as community cohesion were used less often. In this case, data on community cohesion is inherently more difficult to gather than data on unemployment or income. This does not mean community cohesion is any less important than other indicators, but practical matters such as budget and time constraints are important factors in choosing a set of social indicators and these issues are reflected in the matrix of indicators used in these 22 initiatives.

One of the initiatives mentioned above is the Interior Columbia Ecosystem Management Project (Force and Machlis, 1997). Implicit in the title of this project is the ecosystem management approach. This theoretical perspective allows project leaders to develop a comprehensive set of indicators that serves as a technical assessment or measurement of progress toward chosen goals. The authors suggest that social indicators should cover four main categories: natural resources, socioeconomic resources, cultural resources, and social institutions. From this general conviction, they set out to determine specific indicators that will serve to measure ecosystem management objectives in a specified region. As mentioned earlier, while some indicators were preferable to others, the availability and cost of retrieving data and the reliability of data sources from one year to the next influenced their decisions.

The Foothills Model Forest social indicators project employs six broad variables and their associated indicators: population and migration, income distribution, human capital, poverty, employment, and real estate. Although these six variables are not a comprehensive array of indicators, they were chosen for three specific reasons:

1. Published literature documenting indicator approaches to community sustainability in forest-dependent communities shows the repeated use of these indicators primarily because the issues coming out of these variables are highly relevant to many forest-dependent communities.

2. Data used to measure these indicators are readily available from existing data sources and, for ongoing monitoring, can be retrieved at relatively low cost. By using secondary data from municipal agencies and Statistics Canada, expensive data collection exercises like comprehensive community surveys are unnecessary to gather data on these indicators. However, surveys may be required to collect pertinent information on community cohesion, entrepreneurship, or sense of place issues. We envision the next major update for the six indicators in this study to be completed after the 2001 census data become available.

3. With minimal effort, these six social indicators can be integrated with other indicators designed to measure sustainable development on a regional level. Within the Foothills Model Forest, identifying this integrated set of measures is already under way.

The following sections provide a more detailed rationale for the indicators chosen as they relate to historic and contemporary conditions in forest-dependent communities. The issues discussed under each category come from the literature on natural resource-based communities and will be described in their contemporary context with Statistics Canada data.

One of the overarching goals in this study is to compare social indicators in the Foothills Model Forest with other comparison jurisdictions. Data are presented from three jurisdictions within the Foothills Model Forest: Hinton, Jasper, and the rural jurisdiction of Yellowhead Municipal District #94 (YH94). Provincial and urban jurisdictions are often provided as a basis of comparison, and further comparisons will be made between other forest-dependent communities across Canada in an ongoing study sponsored by the Canadian Model Forest Network (Beckley, 1999). Specific measurements are extracted from an appendix of data tables at the back of each report and included in the body of the text as figures.

1.5.1 Population and Migration

Poverty and unemployment may persist in forest-dependent communities, in part, because people are attracted to the prospect of good jobs in these remote rural communities. Those not finding steady work may remain, relying on social assistance while they wait for opportunities. Others may leave quickly, resulting in high population turnover. Both scenarios have implications for community sustainability. There is some Canadian precedent in studying population dynamics in resource-dependent communities, although not specifically in forest-dependent communities. If retirees cannot be induced to remain in communities, and youth are forced to leave to find work, there may be unbalanced age-distributions (with concentrations of middle-aged residents and young children). We would consider a stable population (low turnover) with a typical age distribution[1] to be an indicator of community sustainability. This component would test empirically whether Canada's forest-dependent communities exhibit such qualities.

1.5.2 Employment

Indicators of employment and labor force participation provide an important source of understanding regarding the health of a community. Healthy communities are marked by high labor force participation and low unemployment, indicating a condition where a large proportion of residents can find gainful employment. In addition, healthy and productive communities are concerned with other aspects of employment such as working conditions, employment stability, and employment compatibility with available human capital. Although high wages persist in unionized, resource-extraction and production jobs in forest-industry-dependent communities, there may be population sub-groups that are excluded from these benefits. It is likely that Canada's comprehensive social safety net has shielded many rural Canadians from some of the social pathologies associated with poverty and unemployment in U.S. resource-dependent communities. However, the dismantling of that safety net at the provincial and federal levels may result in persistent, high unemployment rates that could, in turn, contribute to long-term instability in forest-industry-dependent communities.

1.5.3 Income Distribution

An assessment of income distribution allows us to examine concentrations and deficiencies in employment income according to specific characteristics such as sex and race. Aggregate measures of income are often high in forest-industry-dependent places due to high wages paid in unionized jobs in the forest industry. However, high averages may mask the fact that these places often have bi-modal income distributions with some families enjoying great prosperity, while others are merely getting by. It is important to look not only at averages, but at the distribution of income by category of earnings, such as the proportion of population with higher incomes compared with the proportion of population with lower incomes. Income is also assessed by examining income distribution in association with other variables such as sex.

1.5.4 Poverty

Many forest-industry-dependent communities enjoy high average incomes, quality amenities, and related advantages over other rural communities and small towns. However, census averages, taken by themselves, do not describe what is going on at the margins of society. There is a large body of recent literature on the prevalence and persistence of poverty in resource-dependent communities in the United States. Various theoretical explanations are offered, but frequently discussion focuses on the vulnerability of these single-resource communities to macro-economic changes. Moreover, poverty may be a significant problem for population sub-groups that are not able to break into the high-wage resource-sector labor market. We use low-income cut-offs as a proxy for poverty. With this objective measure, we can gain some sense of poverty in the Foothills Model Forest.

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[1] As a basis of comparison, a normal age distribution will approximate the age distribution of provincial and national averages.

1.5.5 Human Capital

Community sustainability depends on the collective capacity of communities to adapt to changing global economic and social conditions. A community's capacity to adapt to change is largely a function of the aggregate skill set and educational attainment of its population. As it is difficult to quantitatively measure a community's collective entrepreneurial skills, or creative capacity, educational attainment is used as a proxy measure for human capital. Traditionally, educational requirements in the forestry sector were very low, resulting in low educational attainment for mill towns. Tourism communities often have high education levels but for low wages, suggesting underutilized capacity in the labor market. Human capital, as measured by educational attainment, then is another critical social indicator for determining community sustainability.

1.5.6 Real Estate

The rationale behind examining real estate values is that local real estate values are reasonably good indicators of the health of local economies. They tend to track local economic trends. For example, if a forest processing plant was in financial trouble, and in danger of closure, real estate values would decline. If, on the other hand, a new plant was being built, real estate prices might be temporarily inflated. If forest-dependent places are subject to boom-and-bust cycles, as the literature suggests, this fact should be reflected in real estate values.

1.6 Beyond Basic Facts

The six indicators outlined in Section 1.5 provide an objective set of baseline data that can be used in future comparisons. All of the indicators chosen are relatively easy to quantify, generalize, and compare across jurisdictions. On the other hand, measurements of each indicator simply provide basic facts. They clearly demonstrate the current social or economic condition on a provincial or local level. But they do not, in and of themselves, provide any indication as to why certain conditions exist. Measurements are often reported for each indicator over a 15-year period but if, for example, data show that Jasper real estate values are increasing (see Chapter 7, Real Estate), without a basic understanding of the local context that includes social, economic, and political changes, the measurement has lost some of its usefulness. To move beyond the basic facts, we have included a major qualitative element to this study, thus providing an essential local context and local-level understanding of the social indicators in question. In large measure we use this qualitative or narrative information to inform the quantitative data (*i.e.*, do the objective conditions translate into attributes of sustainability?). Each chapter begins with a review of quantitative data, followed by a qualitative analysis of the local residents' perceptions of community well-being vis-a-vis the indicator in question. In this way, this document is not merely a reporting of numbers and data trends but, more so, a holistic assessment of the social and economic conditions under which human communities reside in a forest ecosystem.

1.6.1 Resident Perspectives as a Data Source

Qualitative research methods are a well-established tradition in the social sciences. Although the quantitative versus qualitative debate continues to rage in some science circles, a broad consensus is emerging that accepts the complementarity of these methods of inquiry. This is the perspective taken here where an attempt is made to integrate the *numbers* with the *stories* and, in so doing, provide a more comprehensive understanding of social and economic conditions in the Foothills Model Forest. By using both methods, we believe that statistical data are more accurately interpreted from a local context, thereby providing a more accurate description and explanation of the local conditions that surround a particular indicator. Without this narrative information, quantitative data can be left void of meaning or subject to wide, speculative interpretation.

1.6.2 Qualitative Data

Our primary source of narrative information is a series of open-ended interviews with residents of the Foothills Model Forest. The study included 145 interviews and most of these were tape recorded and transcribed. We selected participants using a snowball sampling method, targeting key informants within community sectors such as industry, government, social services, and forest user groups. Categories of survey respondents are displayed in Figure 1.1 by primary affiliation.

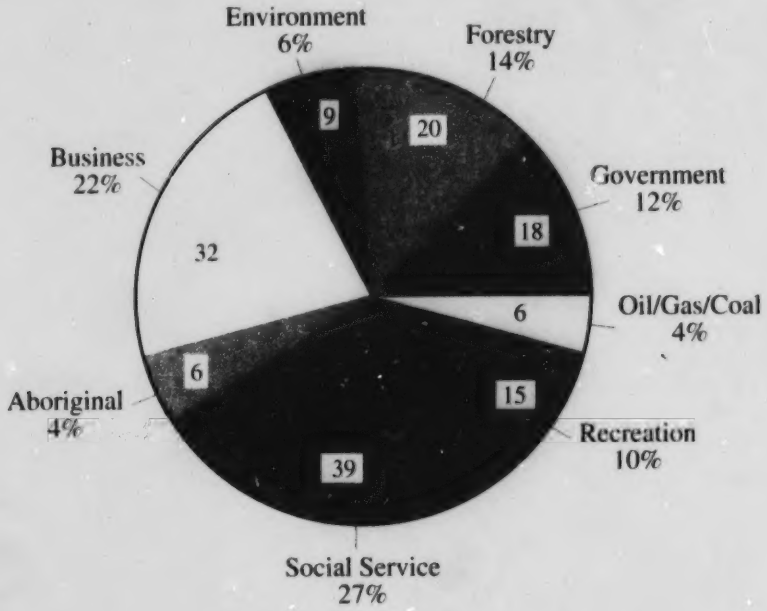

Figure 1.1 Foothills interviews by primary affiliation.

Open-ended discussions are an important source of data because they allow the researcher to capture a particular point of view without predetermining what the important issues are for a resident and how those issues relate to community sustainability. The interviewers provided a loose set of questions around the issue of community sustainability and sustainable natural resource management and then gave residents an opportunity to frame the issues from their personal experience. From these discussions, we recorded a detailed and often varied set of perspectives on a wide range of issues. This method has obvious advantages over other more structured methods because issues or hypotheses are not formulated in advance. They emerge or evolve as the study progresses. Furthermore, by recording the exact words and phrases of residents, much more than simple ideas are communicated. Feeling, sensitivity, passion, and anger become a part of the data set. According to Patton (1990:24).

> Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the way they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking.

Here then is the basic rationale for using interview data as a primary source of information. The study provided a framework for residents to express their points of view on a full range of social indicators and to do so in a way that gives them the freedom to define the issues. From this exploratory and iterative process, hypotheses and research themes emerged and evolved as learning occurred.

1.6.3 *Themes and Statements*

Analysis of the narrative data was a multi-stage process. All transcribed interviews were entered into a computer software package called Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (*NUD-IST*). This package allows the user to handle qualitative data by supporting processes of coding, indexing, and searching text or patterns of text. The search pattern function was used in this case to generate raw data specific to an indicator. As an example, when searching

for statements on poverty, the program generated a report including all paragraphs that contained the word *poverty* or related words such as *rich, poor, haves,* and *have nots* and so on. By using this middle-stage report containing all raw narrative statements on poverty, the authors avoided the laborious process of reading through all 145 interviews and extracting statements on poverty. In the analysis of this data, if a particular issue or perspective related to poverty was mentioned frequently, then that issue became a theme to be explore in detail and included in the final report. For instance, when discussing threats to sustainable community development in Hinton, residents frequently mentioned threats external to the local economy such as fluctuating global commodity prices and the international environmental lobby. These statements then are a theme titled *external threats* in the narrative data from Hinton.

The process of determining whether a set of statements is a theme or simply isolated or one-off comments from a few disgruntled or uninformed residents is inherently subjective. This study set out to understand social and economic conditions in the Foothills Model Forest by listening to and recording the experiences of a wide range of residents. Therefore, we explicitly sampled single mothers, retirees, young people, educators, social workers, and foresters. Local spokespersons and community boosters were also interviewed, but not exclusively. Not surprisingly, perspectives on sustainable development are as varied as the people who participated in this project and the process of sharing information of this kind with community members who might otherwise never experience or understand some conditions within their own community is, in and of itself, a worthy exercise. Ultimately, the themes documented in this report should summon an echo or spark a flash of recognition among interested and concerned residents of these communities. The extent to which this happens serves to validate the themes included in this report.

In choosing specific statements to include in the final report, anecdotal viewpoints and events are used as a summary typifying a problem or issue as perceived by a local resident. The practice of using anecdotes in qualitative research has a long theoretical tradition contemporized in social research by authors such as Berger and Luckman (1976) and Benford and Hunt (1992). In the words of Krogman (1996), "the anecdote must be complex enough to be representative of the subject, but simple enough to reduce the subject matter to an easily understandable form." In using this method of narrative data and direct quotation, there is an effort to *give voice* to those who would otherwise not be heard in the public discourse on community sustainability. These voices often come from the margins of society. Sequences of similar or contrasting statements are often used to explore the issues contained within a single theme. Statements relevant to a particular indicator but not included in the body of the text are attached at the end of each chapter as an appendix.

In the end, what we gain from this method, in combination with the statistical information, is a more sophisticated and wide-reaching perspective on social indicators in the Foothills Model Forest. Instead of merely determining the rate of unemployment in 1996 and observing unemployment trends, the narrative data provide first-hand accounts of technology change within primary industries and the impact modern technology is having on local labor requirements. Likewise, narrative data on employment in Jasper clearly show the seasonality of employment and the preference some residents have for the freedom to pursue other leisure-related activities in the off-season. This situation is very much a lifestyle decision and is totally masked in the statistical information. In real terms, quantitative and qualitative data used in complementary fashion provide important insights into the sustainability of these forest-sector communities.

1.6.4 *Narrative Data in Appendices*

The additional appendix information provided at the back of each chapter is intended to support the themes generated in each chapter. Key narrative statements are included in the text of each chapter but additional statements provided in the appendix support the narrative themes. Readers may wish to reference this information as supporting data and a 'thicker' description of issues pertinent to the chapter topic.

Chapter 2.
POPULATION AND MIGRATION

2.1 Objective

To describe and explain the historic and contemporary Foothills Model Forest human population by examining changes in total population, age distribution by sex, and migration patterns in selected locales. Secondary data is supported by local perceptions of population and migration in Hinton and Jasper.

2.2 Rationale

Resource-dependent communities are particularly vulnerable to business cycles and market fluctuations that directly affect migration patterns in local human populations. Population and migration data can make important contributions to the ongoing discussion of sustainability in forest-sector host communities by identifying historic and contemporary patterns of change in relation to regional social and economic conditions.

2.3 Population and Migration in Resource-Dependent Communities

The study of human populations is the science of demography. Its primary focus is the size, distribution, composition, and change in human numbers according to a range of spatial scales. Demographic variables include (Teevan, 1992): fertility (births in a population), mortality (deaths in a population), and migration (movements of population across significant boundaries). Although all three variables are important components of population change, migration is singled out in this section as a crucial dimension of population change in forest-dependent communities.

Host communities of natural resource industries are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in the demand for the products they produce because of their historically narrow economic base and their exposure to market fluctuations. These fluctuations are not simply local occurrences but are global in nature and can send small communities through erratic changes in economic fortune within relatively short periods of time. In times of relative prosperity, people are attracted to the community in search of employment or business opportunities. In times of relative decline, the community becomes less desirable and some proportion of residents may seek work in other centers. Layoffs may occur as cost-cutting measures in lean times, or through efforts to remain competitive through adoption of labor-saving technologies. These *push* and *pull* factors are major causes of human migration, with the implication that people do not move unless they are induced to do so by some external influence. The other important aspect of migration is its inherently social and economic dimension (as opposed to fertility and mortality which are essentially biological factors). Unlike fertility and mortality, migration can be a process of quick change in response to dynamic social and economic conditions.

Fluctuating populations are not necessarily problematic in and of themselves. Sociologists, in particular, are interested in various social pathologies associated with rapid growth and decline in resource-dependent communities. Many of the indicators discussed in this work are inter-related. Population dynamics is known to be associated with poverty, employment, income, and real estate. For example, if half the *population* of a community leaves due to a plant, mill or mine closure, *real estate* values will likely decline due to a temporary glut of housing on the market and a lack of buyers (assuming a narrow economic base in the community). This *employment*-driven change will affect rates of *poverty* and likely have *income distribution* effects in the community as the number of high wage earners in resource sectors declines.

So, more than a concern with population change itself, social commentators are concerned with social change that frequently accompanies rapid population change. The boomtown literature and social impact assessment literature of the 1970s and 1980s review the social pathologies that are of concern. In declining communities, in addition to declining real estate values, increasing poverty, and lower incomes, there are frequently problems of social organization, an overbuilt local

infrastructure, and household stresses such as substance abuse, spousal abuse, and marital tension due to strained household economic circumstances.

The literature on boomtowns focused much more intensively on the social pathologies associated with rapid growth. In forestry, the negative effects of community population decline were documented and debated from the early part of the 20th Century (Dana 1918, Kaufman and Kaufman 1946). What was novel in the boomtown literature in the 1970s and 1980s was that researchers claimed that rapid growth could be just as disruptive as rapid decline. In many cases, rapid growth led to similar pathologies to those experienced in declining communities—marital stress, spousal abuse, weakening of social ties, declines in attachment to place, and so forth. Krannich and Grieder (1984) point out that negative effects may not be experienced throughout the community, but rather may be focused in specific sub-populations. Freudenburg (1984) and Osborne et al. (1984) document negative effects of rapid growth on youth. In some instances, declines in quality of life associated with rapid growth were not due to actual changes in objective conditions, but rather were a function of changes in community residents' perceptions of conditions. Krannich et al. (1985) reported that the incidence of crime was similar in rapid- and slow-growing communities in the inter-mountain west, but that fear of crime was substantially higher in the rapid-growth communities. There are a few works that look specifically at these issues in the Canadian context (Bowles 1981, Detomasi and Gartrell 1984).

The emphasis on rapid growth and decline in raw numbers of residents masks another important demographic variable, namely population turnover or transience. Marchak (1983) describes the negative effects of high population turnover in a forestry community in British Columbia, even while the community maintained a fairly constant population. Turnover makes it difficult to establish friendships and broader social networks, with the result that social capital is often lower in resource communities as opposed to rural communities with a high proportion of lifelong or long-term residents. If people do not plan to stay, as is often the case with employment-minded immigrants, they are not willing to make financial investments or improvements in property, nor are they willing to make social investments and commitments to the community. In this chapter, therefore, we examine both absolute population levels and the degree of population stability with respect to turnover and transience.

The data presented in this report are used to describe changes in population and migration within the Foothills Model Forest. Comparison jurisdictions are included to measure similarities and differences in the Model Forest and in other jurisdictions. Also, narrative data are presented from Hinton and Jasper to explain some of the changes in population and migration and to provide local insight that is not available from secondary data alone.

2.4 Measuring Population and Migration

2.4.1 Population

Between 1961 and 1996, the number of residents who made the Foothills Model Forest their home increased by more than 120%. The top line of Figure 2.1[2] indicates somewhat erratic population growth with rapid growth in the 5-year period following 1966 and then again after 1976. Since 1981, the entire Foothills population has increased moderately from 21,000 to 23,000 residents. After 10 years of stable populations between 1981 and 1991, all jurisdictions register slight increases in population between 1991 and 1996. A closer look at Figure 2.1 reveals similar patterns in the Foothills population (top line) and the Hinton population (solid line). In the last 35 years, the Jasper population increased by approximately 2,000 while the rural jurisdiction (YH94) remained relatively constant. Hinton then appears to be the primary locus of population growth within the Foothills Model Forest.

One of the historic conditions expressed by population demographics in resource-dependent communities is the disproportionate number of men to women. Although early settlements, in some cases, consisted of little more than all male lumber camps, modern timber-dependent communities enjoy a relative balance between male and female populations. Lucas (1971) describes an evolution of communities: from construction, to recruitment, to transition, to maturity. While Marchak (1983) described conditions as poor and opportunities as very limited for women in 1983, conditions have improved marginally for women in the late 1990s (see Chapter 3, Employment and Chapter 4, Income Distribution). The construction of modern facilities such as homes and schools, as well as the development of modern industrial technology provide women with more employment opportunities in resource industries. In addition, service sector and professional employment opportunities are more common now than in early forest-dependent communities. These changes have helped to close the gap between

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B. Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1998, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada.

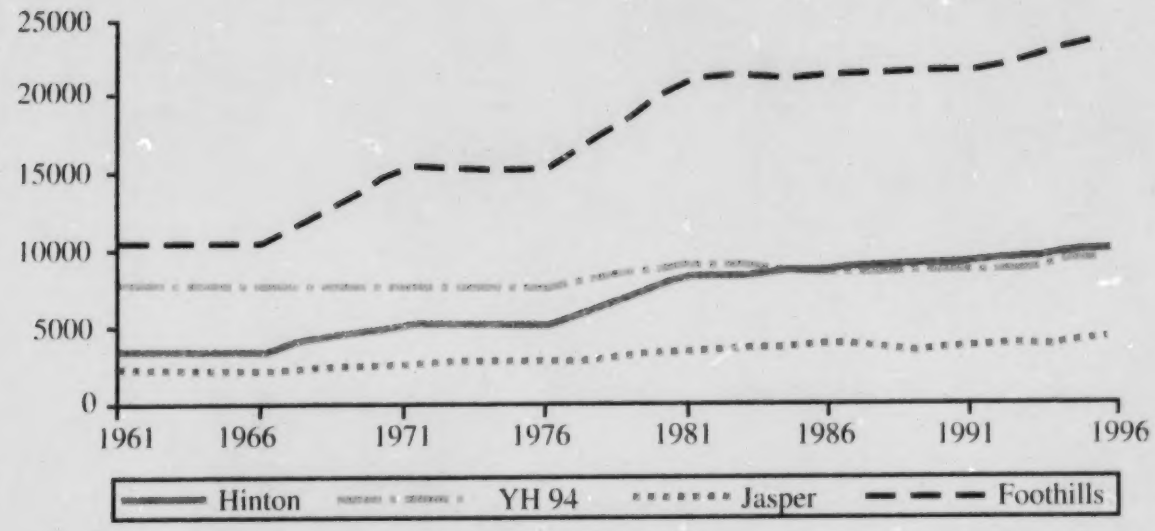

Figure 2.1 Population 1961–1996: Foothills Model Forest jurisdictions.

the sexes within these communities. Although the following figures show continued and somewhat significant differences according to sex in population within the Model Forest, these differences exist also within provincial jurisdictions (Table 2.5 a,b). Therefore, although significant, the gap reported here is not unique to these communities.

In Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4, we observe some interesting differences in population demographics between jurisdictions. The most obvious of these differences include the following: there are proportionately fewer young people between age 0 and 14 in Jasper than in Hinton, there are proportionately more people over the age of 45 in YH94, the imbalance between men and women is most prominent among age 30-44 cohorts in Hinton and Jasper and most prominent among age 45-59 cohorts in the rural jurisdiction (YH94).

When combined in Figure 2.5, the age distribution of these jurisdictions varies around the provincial average. Within the Foothills Model Forest, Jasper age distribution deviates more widely than the other distributions with fewer young people below age 14 and more residents in the age 15–29 bracket. Hinton follows the provincial pattern quite closely while YH94 reports fewer residents below age 30 and more in the age 45-59 bracket than does the province as a whole.

In addition to the single-year comparison of population distributions in 1996, it is useful to look at the trends in age cohort populations over time. As suggested earlier, trends can assist communities in determining their future needs. If the community has an aging population (that is a higher proportion of the total population in the cohort range over 55 years of age), then housing or medical services may need to be examined in light of future demand. If there is a high proportion of young people in the community, then to maintain that population, the community may consider a range of necessities including employment and educational opportunities, recreation, and child care facilities. Similarly, we observe in Chapter 6, Human Capital, that more women are participating in the labor force than in the recent past, and these women will be seeking meaningful long-term employment opportunities.

Figure 2.6 illustrates how the demographics of a community change over a 15-year period. From 1981 to 1996, the proportion of Hinton residents aged 15-24 declined by more than 6% while the proportion of residents aged 35-44 increased by

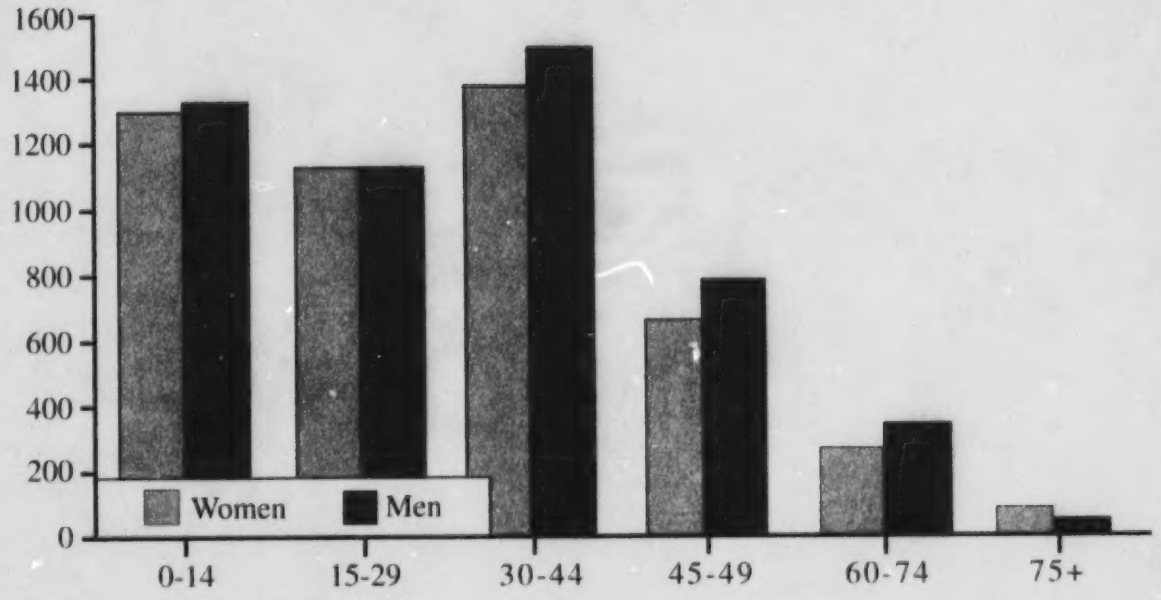

Figure 2.2 Age distribution of Hinton by sex, 1996.

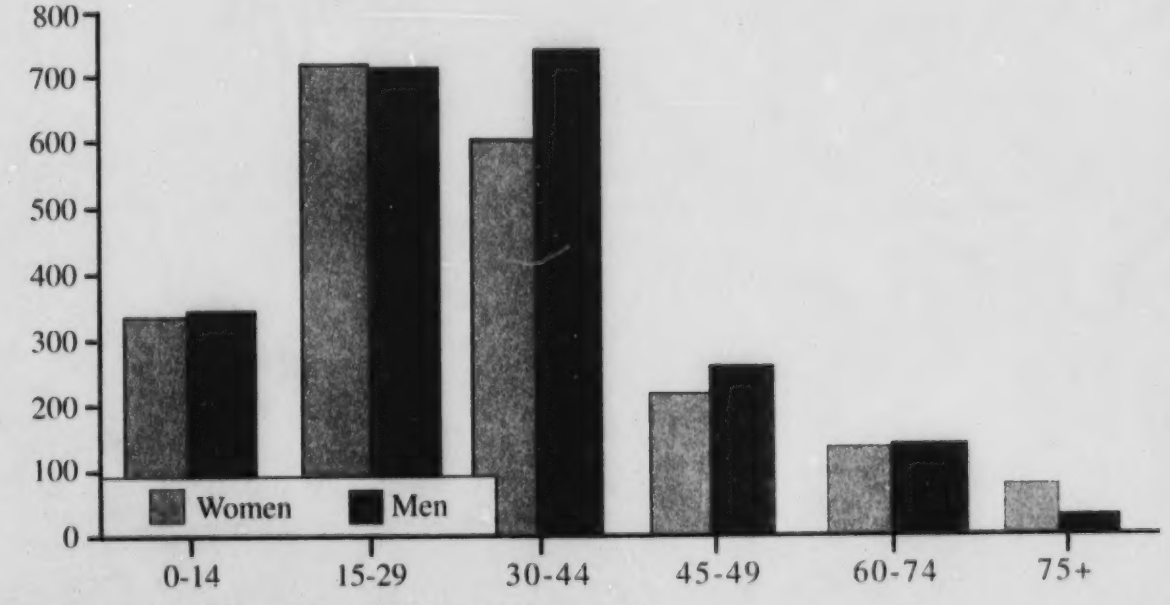

Figure 2.3 Age distribution of Jasper by sex, 1996.

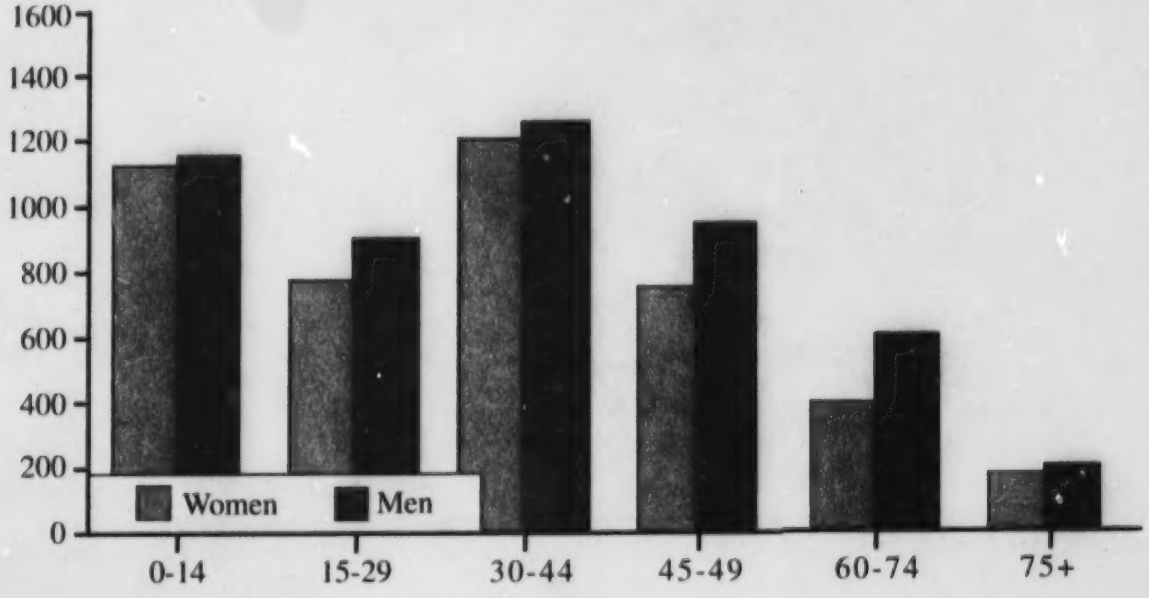

Figure 2.4 Age distribution of YH94 by sex, 1996.

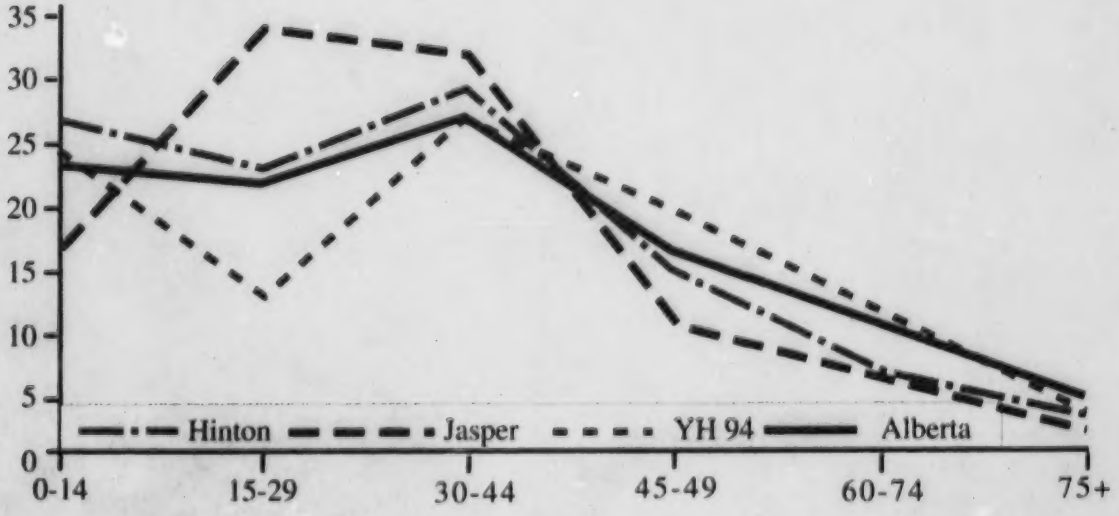

Figure 2.5 Percentage of total population by age cohort, 1996.

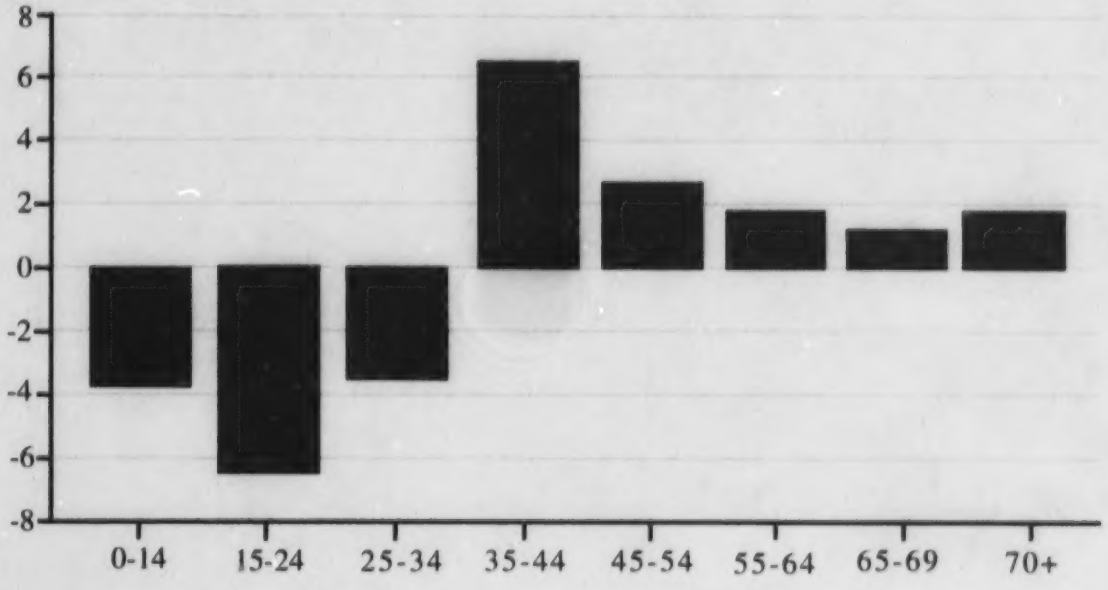

Figure 2.6 Percentage change in Hinton age groups between 1981 and 1996.

more than 6%. Essentially, this figure depicts 15 years of aging within the population. It is also interesting to note that the older age groups experienced a noticeable increase in population during the same period. In effect, Hinton is an aging population and will need to prepare for the possibility that the largest proportion of residents, now in their 30s and 40s, are likely to retire in Hinton and require appropriate local services to meet their needs. Hinton developed as an industrial town in the 1960s. The elderly population has only developed as industrial labor force recruits have aged.

2.4.2 Migration

As discussed earlier, of the three factors affecting population (fertility, mortality, and migration), migration is the most influential at the national level. In fact, much of the historic fluctuation in prosperity among resource-dependent communities is due to in- and out-migration. *Pull and push forces* on local populations are generated commonly by market volatility and these fluctuations often directly affect the general well-being of local communities. A key objective in mitigating the push and pull of local populations is through regional initiatives such as economic diversification and sophisticated resource management strategies. One such initiative in the forest sector is the contemporary approach to *sustainable forest management*. In theory, this forest management approach includes human populations as integral dimensions of the large ecosystem and in doing so, seeks to understand the dynamic relationship between resource extraction and human well-being. The overarching goal in this regard is to achieve some measure of community stability or community well-being. One measure of stability is the size and composition of human communities over time.

Data on local population and migration levels can provide some sense of the dynamic relationship between employment, industrial activity, and quality of life. The assumption here is that stable populations are a factor in community well-being. Although short-term residents show less willingness or capacity to support local institutions or contribute to sustainable communities, long-term residents can establish long-term commitments to neighborhoods, local institutions, and the natural environment—all essential factors in achieving sustainable human communities.

Statistics Canada measures migration in various ways. Movements are recorded in spatial scales from across international boundaries to across the street. The Statistics Canada definition of *migrant* is a *mover* who, on Census Day, was

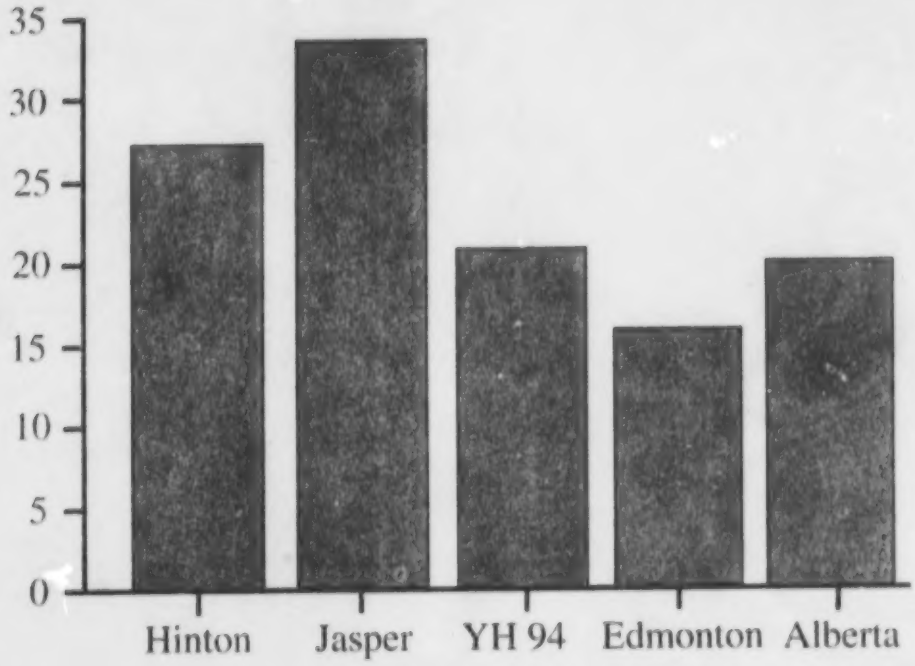

Figure 2.7 Percentage of residents migrating within the 5 years prior to 1996.

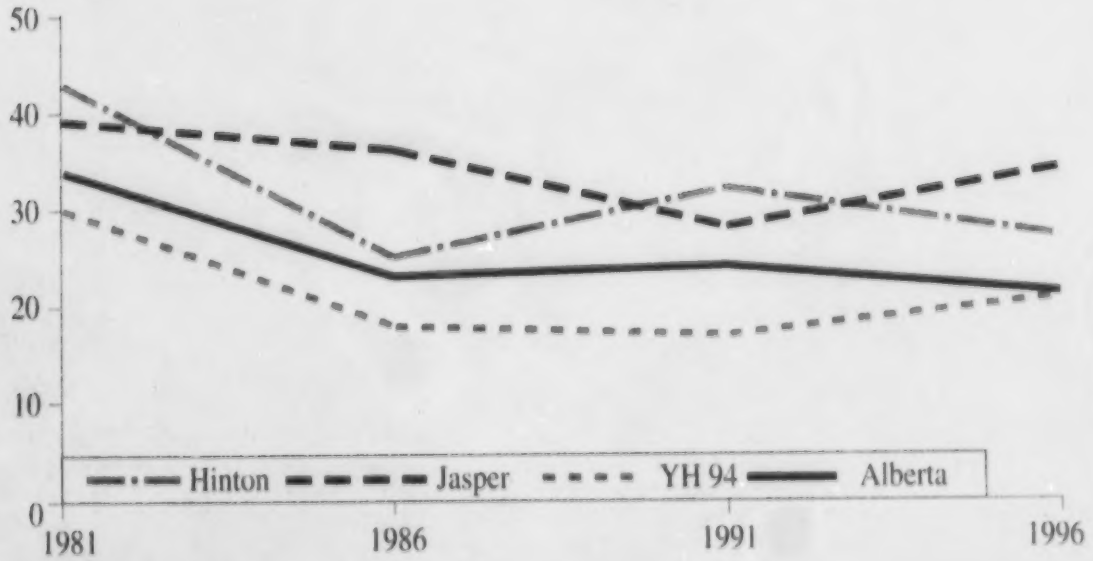

Figure 2.8 Percentage change in migration, 1981–1996.

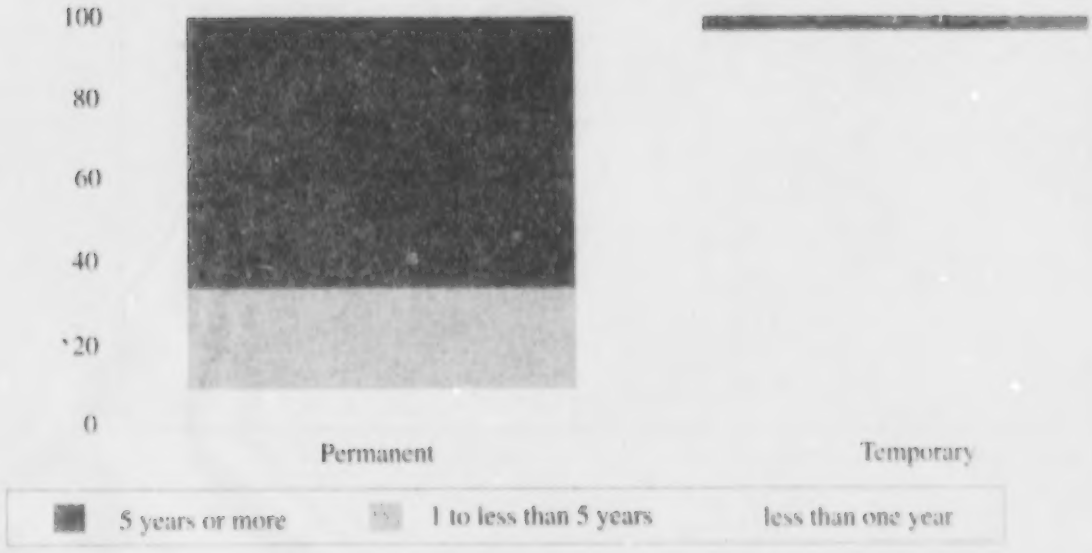

Figure 2.9 Declared length of residency in Jasper, 1997.

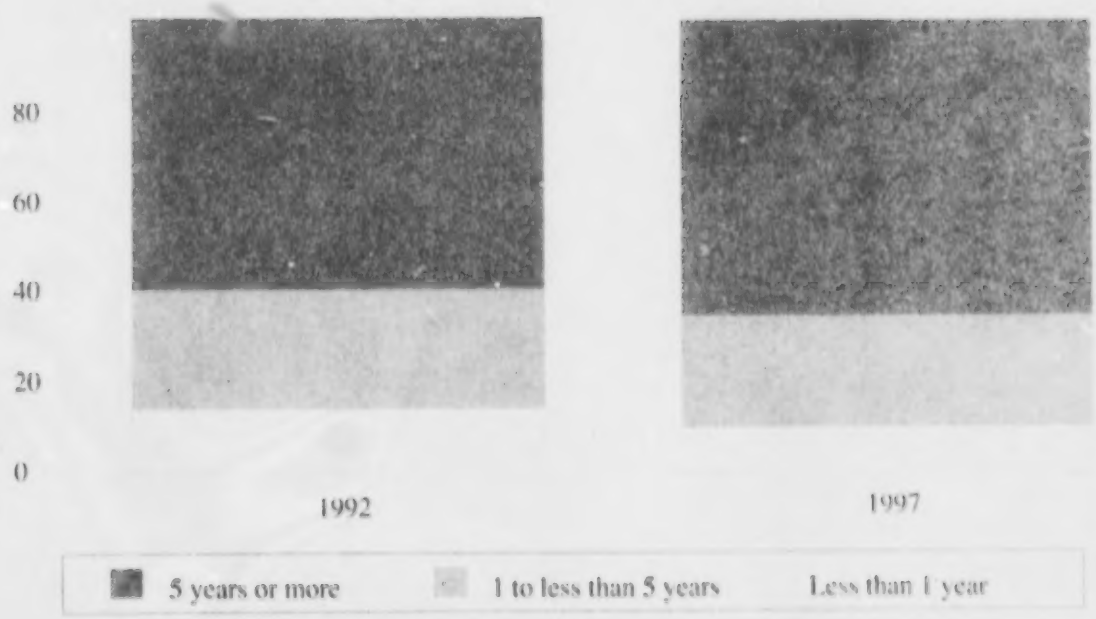

Figure 2.10 Change in declard length of residency among permanent residents in Jasper, between 1992–1997.

residing in a different census subdivision (CSD) 5 years earlier (internal migrant) or who was living outside Canada 5 years earlier (external migrant). Under this definition, someone who moves from Jasper to Hinton would be considered an internal migrant, while someone who moves across town would be considered a mover. This section is concerned with migrants, both internal and external. As the national census only records those who migrate (in-migrant) to a CSD, it does not provide direct information about the number of people who migrate out (out-migrant) of a CSD. Reading total population data with migration data for a CSD will provide some sense of out-migration by determining the relative gain or loss of migrants in the community. For instance, Hinton population numbers increased slightly over the 15-year period between 1981 and 1996 (Figure 2.1). During the same period, migration rates averaged 30 to 40% (Figure 2.8). Therefore, if we attribute some population growth to fertility, we can conclude that the out-migration rate was approximately the same or slightly lower than the in-migration rate.

The data provided in Figure 2.7 indicates a high rate of in-migration in all jurisdictions. Hinton and Jasper report the highest number of migrants at 27% and 34% respectively and Edmonton reports the lowest at 16%. These figures suggest that, in relation to provincial averages, the historically transient conditions in resource-dependent communities persist in Hinton and Jasper.

Figure 2.8 provides 15-year migration trends in the Foothills Model Forest compared to Alberta as a whole. In general, both Hinton and Jasper migration rates are higher than the provincial average while YH94 migration rates are consistently lower. The sharp drop in all jurisdictions after 1981 is perhaps best explained by large economic changes affecting the province during that period. "Stagnation, unemployment, and political uncertainty produced by the collapse of international energy and wheat prices in the 1980s" (Pratt and Urquhart, 1994) produced a great deal of migration in the early 1980s but, by 1986, migration had dropped substantially. Migration to Hinton began increasing again after 1986 reflecting substantial *pull* factors such as growing forestry and service-sector industries and a recovery in oil and gas activity.

Additional information on population and migration is available for Jasper from a municipal census conducted in 1992 and again in 1997 (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 1992; Poboktan Communications, 1997a). Community leaders in Jasper rely on the municipal census to gain a more accurate record of temporary and permanent residents and to gain a better understanding of dwelling types and population density not measured in the national census in such detail. The June 1997 municipal census reports 3,740 permanent residents and 917 temporary residents for a total population of 4,691. Figure 2.9 illustrates the declared (or intended) length of stay for permanent and temporary residents. Among permanent residents, the declared length of stay has shifted slightly from 1992 to 1997. Figure 2.10 shows more permanent residents declaring 5 years or more as their intended length of stay and fewer residents declaring less than 5 years.

Data in Section 2.2.1 provides a general picture of age distribution, population trends between 1981 and 1996 and migration trends between 1981 and 1997. The overall population of the Foothills Model Forest has increased during this period, age distributions vary, sometimes substantially, between jurisdictions, and migration, although higher than the provincial average, is generally stable at around 30%. Some provincial or national conditions such as the economic slowdown in the early 1980s can explain some of these trends in population and migration. Other trends require a greater understanding of local conditions to interpret and predict accurately. Community perspectives on population and migration presented in the next section assist in this understanding by providing a crucial local context to this discussion.

2.5 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Population and Migration

A reported feature (Figure 2.1) of Hinton demographics is the relatively flat population line since 1981. This flat population line can be misleading, however, because it says nothing about the flow of people in and out of town. Between 1981 and 1996, Hinton actually maintained a high rate of migration, suggesting a significant flow of people moving in and out of the community. Residents hold contradictory perspectives on the extent of migration in the community and they also differ on their perception of population change due to recent economic expansion. Statements are organized into three themes: an aging population, is Hinton growing?, and transience and transition.

2.5.1 An Aging Population

Figure 2.6 provides a clear picture of Hinton's aging population. Between 1981 and 1996, the proportion of residents between ages 15 and 24 decreased by more than 6% while the proportion of residents between ages 30 and 44 increased by more than 6%. This demographic transition simply reflects an aging population. As young workers arrived in Hinton

during the late 1970s and early 1980s, they remained in the community and are now in their early- to mid-40s. Many current residents, especially long-term residents, observe this aging population as a very positive condition whereby more and more families are calling Hinton home, even after retirement.

> Generally speaking in Hinton our senior population is growing. Hinton is a fairly young town when you are comparing age populations. Our senior group is quite small but the original Hintonites are getting into the senior age group and they are forming a larger group now so there is more demand for services from that particular group. ***Senior Citizen***

> ***Question:*** When you look at the community itself, having lived here for so many years, have you noticed any trends within the population demographically?
> ***Answer:*** It's getting older. I think when I first come here it was a very young average age. The majority of people came here for the jobs and the money and they didn't consider this their home. They considered it the temporary location of work and home was the place where they came from. And being an old time Lions Club member, when I moved to Hinton it was tough to sell tickets for community activities because they are saying that they are not interested in the town, they just want to go to work, make the money, and get out. That was in the very early 70s. And by the late 70s, and early 80s you could notice a dramatic change in that because people were willing to do something because they belonged to the community. Now you've got a lot of older people, our average age is in the 40s. Retirees are not moving away. ***Town Officer***

There is little doubt about the aging population of Hinton and as multiple generations of families call Hinton home, stability develops within the community. This stability in turn allows the community to benefit from a living history, represented in community institutions, service organizations, educational institutions, and sports teams. With this aging population come certain community responsibilities, however. One example is the growing demand for appropriate retirement housing. This issue is being addressed to some extent with the recent construction of a senior citizens' facility but, as the aging trend continues, more facilities will be required, as well as recreation and medical facilities to serve this growing segment of the population.

2.5.2 *Is Hinton Growing?*

Although the population of Hinton is, without question, aging, the perception of population growth is much less certain. Figure 2.1 shows modest growth between 1981 and 1996, and predictions about the town population post-1996 are mixed, with some residents expecting rapid population expansion due to regional economic development, such as the modern sawmill and the proposed Cheviot mine development.

> The pulp mill had a 350 million dollar expansion. And then in the last couple of years, they put in that sawmill, which brought the population up dramatically. That created a whole lot more jobs. And of course, there's been expansion of some of the mines, too.... small expansions. ***Recreation Industry Employee***

These developments, along with the development of new housing subdivisions, provide a definite sense of population growth within the community. Community leaders believe the current population of Hinton is around 10,000, which represents a modest increase over the period between 1981 and 1996, but nowhere near the growth experienced between 1971 and 1981. Cautious observers of economic activity in Hinton are less willing to attribute these modest population increases to resource industry expansion. In fact, Chapter 3, Employment, indicates a perspective on workplace automation in the resource sector that suggests that, although expansion is taking place, very few new jobs are being created within those industries. Jobs are simply made obsolete with advanced technology.

> I know someone in Edmonton asked me how many new jobs will be created by the Cheviot mine and I don't think there will be very many new jobs except maybe for the people who are going to rehabilitate the old mine site. What it will create is a status quo in the community which is very important. To let those 500 people who have jobs keep those jobs so that the family can stay healthy. But I'm not really aware that it's going to create a huge influx of jobs. What we are talking about is keeping people who are already employed, employed. And maybe their children. ***Public Service Employee***

From this perspective, any new population growth is due less to resource industry expansion and more to expansion in other sectors of the economy, such as retail, accommodation, and tourism. In addition, new housing developments are driven by demand created within the existing population and not from in-migrants. As Chapter 7, Real Estate, states, second- and third-generation families seeking to move upmarket account for most of this development.

There is significant potential for future growth in Hinton, though there are some constraints regarding where and how that growth might occur. Recent years have seen a substantial amount of economic spillover from the tourism economy of Jasper. Several new service establishments have sprung up in recent years, and most of the demand for these hotels is coming from people using Jasper National Park. Given the housing prices in Jasper, and constraints on new development there, there could be significant residential growth in Hinton as well. Some service workers in Jasper said that they lived in Hinton and commuted to Jasper because it was cheaper to commute to Jasper from Hinton than to live there. According to community leaders, there has been more interest recently among Edmonton residents in purchasing land in the area for second homes. The only private land in Hinton and in the region as a whole is land adjacent to major thoroughfares, the Yellowhead Highway in particular. Therefore, future development in Hinton might well spread the community out in a linear fashion even further than it already is. Community leaders were skeptical about the potential of a "development boom" driven by amenity-based uses of the local resource base as has been witnessed in Canmore in recent years. Although Hinton and Canmore share some characteristics (bordering a national park and on the route between the park and a major urban center), Hinton is further from both Jasper and Edmonton than Canmore is from Banff and Calgary. Nevertheless, population figures, both raw numbers and transience, are key variables to monitor given the potential for growth and potential negative consequences associated with rapid growth and/or high turnover.

2.5.3 *Transience and Transition*

Until 1991, Hinton realized little population growth but, at the same time, rates of migration were higher than in comparison jurisdictions (Figure 2.7). This condition of high migration is indicative of traditional resource-dependent communities responding to the ups and downs of resource-based economies and to the associated demand for labor. Especially during times of sustained economic expansion, migrants are attracted by the possibility of good jobs. Although Hinton represents a modern and somewhat diversified resource economy, migration statistics suggest that it remains relatively transient with more than 25% of its residents migrating between 1991 and 1996. Even so, the general consensus among interviewed residents is that transience or mobility is less prevalent today than in previous years, mostly because of changing attitudes among long-term residents. In previous decades, Hinton was considered a place to make your money and then move on. Now it is perceived more as a community to raise children and retire.

> ***Question:*** **It is not as transient as it used to be?**
> ***Answer:*** I don't think it is. I think people are starting to settle. We have had quite a lot of new housing built and I think....because we haven't had that many new jobs....the population has grown about 3000 in the last 21 years, so that is not a lot really. We have had a lot of new housing built and I think a good portion of that housing is to accommodate the kids of the people who came here in the fifties for the mill. It must be. If we are not creating that many new jobs, we are not bringing that many new people into town, somebody must be buying those houses. There is a brisk market here, especially in that just under, just over $100,000 mark. ***Social Services Employee***
>
> The mill population is very stable. Turnover is low. People stay there for a long time for the pay cheques. The only real seasonal employees are the summer students and the tree planters. The feller-bunchers are going year round. Spring breakup is a slower time but it's really not that dramatic. People don't get laid off or anything. ***Mill Worker***

Although population stability is a perceived condition in Hinton, it is difficult to gain an accurate measure of this condition from census data. This difficulty is in part due to the way in which Statistics Canada measures migration at the community level. Unlike other indicators, such as income distribution or population, we are not provided with the information necessary to determine different rates of migration across occupational categories or income levels. If this were possible, we might observe very different rates of migration within the Hinton population. Using narrative data as a general guide, stable populations are most often discussed in relation to the resource industries such as Weldwood of Canada Ltd. where, as mentioned in the previous statement, "people stay for a long time." Other sectors of the economy may be less amenable to long-term stable employment either because of the nature of the industry or because of employment conditions in other economic sectors. We can observe this contrast in the following statements.

> There are a lot of younger couples with kids. And there are areas like groups of older people, I've heard good things about them. But it's so transient though. I guess if you are a mill person definitely the mill people or the mine people there is some sense of working at the same place. ***Youth Worker***
>
> We've recently done a needs assessment survey which indicated to us that as many as 10% of the population has lived in Hinton for less than 2 years. That's quite a [fluctuating] population. We have an enormous bulge of people in the 30 to 45 age range. We have a growing, admittedly, but relatively small seniors' population. And most of those seniors from 55 on, rather than 65 on. A lot of them have done well. They came 30 to 35 years ago to the mill. They've done well. They have a fairly secure financial future, and they're very active seniors. So again, it's....the overall population in Hinton has been here quite a long time. And as I say, there are people who are retiring now from the mill, who came when it first started. Hinton is still a very young town really. ***Social Services Employee***

Hinton is an aging community but the age demographic remains similar to that of the province as a whole (Figure 2.5). It has experienced modest growth over the last 15 years but migration remains relatively high compared to other jurisdictions in the Foothills Model Forest. This high migration rate might reflect continued optimism in regional economic activity that attracts job seekers from across the continent. But almost as many residents out-migrate as in-migrate indicating some inability among new Hinton residents to realize their employment goals. This condition among recent residents taken together with statements about more and more long-term residents making Hinton home, suggests some polarization in migration rates. Residents associated with the traditional resource-based industries may experience rates of migration among cohorts at much less than 25% in a 5-year period, while residents associated with other sectors such as retail, tourism, and even oil and gas may experience high rates of migration among their peers.

2.6 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Population and Migration

Compared with Hinton, one might expect higher migration rates in Jasper because of the large number of service-sector workers migrating to the community for the tourist season. If Statistics Canada counted this so-called *shadow population*, the official rate of migration would be likely much higher than the 1996 rate of 34% (Figure 2.7). Nonetheless, the Jasper migration rate rose 6% between 1991 and 1996, suggesting high levels of migration within the year-round population of Jasper.

When considering population and migration in Jasper, however, a discussion of the shadow population in relation to the local population is unavoidable. To analyze only the local population, those counted in the Canadian census, bypasses this key demographic condition in Jasper. Although this influx of workers is perennial, the fact that each season brings a new and relatively young labor force makes it difficult for these workers to be anything but temporary residents. These workers provide a necessary service to the community but they are generally unknown by permanent residents and they also bring a host of social issues in their wake ranging from housing density to community health. In this sense, the residents of Jasper exist within two solitudes, distinctly separate yet sharing a highly symbiotic relationship where one cannot exist without the other. Perspectives from interviewed residents resonate with this description in statements like the following.

> Jasper is a schizophrenic town. You have two distinct groups. There are the long-term residents who have a tight little clique. Then there's also the whole transient shadow population. When I first came here I was labeled as a transient. That's a tough one to shake. I was really offended by the treatment from the bank. They wouldn't give me a card at first and when they did I had a $100 withdrawal limit. The library would only let me take out three books at a time for the first year. Everybody thinks you're not going to stick around....There is wide difference between the two populations. The senior high school students are about the only ones that straddle the line. They can move in either community. ***Social Services Employee***

In the past few years, residents observe changes within both of these subpopulations that may serve to change the face of Jasper in the years ahead. Issues of poverty and employment within these subpopulations are dealt with in other chapters of this document (particularly Chapter 4, Income Distribution) so the statements and discussion that follow will focus on demographic issues only. Statements are organized into two areas: change among the shadow population, and change in the local population.

2.6.1 Change in the Shadow Population

Figure 2.1 shows a slight increase in Jasper's population between 1981 and 1996. Figure 2.3 shows a quite dramatic gap, according to sex, between ages 30-44 cohorts, with men outnumbering women in 1996, and the age distribution in Figure 2.5 shows a significantly younger population in Jasper than in other jurisdictions (again, these data do not represent the shadow population insomuch as the younger population indicated in Figure 2.5 is a measure of younger permanent residents). A number of residents mention this demographic shift and provide some rationale for the change:

> Well I think the demographics in Jasper is going to change. Jasper is getting younger. ***Hotel Operator***
>
> People use to come and go. That shadow population is here year round but a lot of those people have started to raise families and so forth and they have become a part of this community so there is an evolution that happens to those people. When you get to the summer months, because you have such an increase in demand for employees that you do find the shadow population does arrive and that's why these businesses have the accommodation that they don't keep up. ***Tourism Consultant***

Chapter 3, Employment, mentions the attempt by business leaders in Jasper to expand the tourist season. Traditionally, seasonal employment was restricted to the summer months and the winter ski season, but to keep facilities busy for a larger part of the year, there is a push to make more use of existing facilities such as hotels and restaurants by expanding tourism into the so-called *shoulder seasons* (typically the Fall and Spring). These initiatives are experiencing a degree of success and the effect on labor is basically an increase in year-round demand—as opposed to increased seasonal demand. In previous years, seasonal employees would come and go, but residents perceive a fairly recent shift toward more long-term employment in the service sector. If otherwise seasonal employees stay in the community year round, then more of this younger population will be counted in the national census and will perhaps make the transition from temporary resident to permanent resident. As is often the case in Jasper, trends in tourism shape the community and this younger population is no exception.

2.6.2 Change in the Local Population

In the introduction to Section 2.6, we mention the two distinct populations coexisting in Jasper: seasonal residents and permanent residents. Within every community, smaller groups form around common interests, age grouping, family ties. But perhaps because of some of the conflicting perspectives on the nature and role of Jasper as a community within a national park, differences here may be more accentuated than in a community such as Hinton or Edson. One resident comments on these groups.

> There are definitely some different groups. Parks Canada stick together. There is a real young, professional-type group. There's also a more intellectual, naturalist-type group. Of course you have the business community with the Greeks and Italians. ***Tourist Industry Employee***

Within these groups of residents, we can see not only occupational groupings but also philosophical or "intellectual" groupings inferred by the interviewee. Community leaders will be faced with these often polarized subpopulations as they examine and debate the future of their community. Likewise, groups will maintain very different views of sustainability within the community and how it can be achieved or maintained. This demographic reality appears to be a distinct challenge to the Jasper leadership as we move into the next century.

Another aspect of demographic change among subpopulations in Jasper is their relative size. Policy changes and economic developments are changing the face of the community by changing the source of long-term employment. While some of the traditional employers are in decline, the service industry is picking up the slack:

> Development will be the big issue in the future. How are we going to deal with the growth will determine how this Park looks in the future. The changing dynamic of the Park is also significant. With Parks and CN declining and tourism growing, how will that affect the town? There will probably be more transience and the problems associated with that. We are becoming a rented town. I think affordable housing is always going to be the big issue. These issues are all linked together and affect each other. ***Social Services Employee***

> So it's tougher with the change in demographics. When I grew up here the town was a lot different than it is now demographically. Now most of the population is in the service sector....I'm not sure that the service industry people have the same commitment to the community that used to be here, they've been here for a shorter period of time and a lot of them don't intend to stay for very long so they don't have the same feeling about it. ***Businessperson***

Both Parks Canada and Canadian National Railway (CN) have undergone or continue to undergo regional staffing reductions and many interviewed residents perceive a shift in employment opportunity away from these traditional employers toward growing tourism activity. New restaurants and retail shops, as well as overnight accommodation units are responsible for much of the new employment for both seasonal and permanent residents. This transition is much the same as that of Hinton employment described in the Section 3.3. What is interesting in terms of population and migration is the shift in relative size of these subpopulations. What is the likely age demographic of these subpopulations and how will this change as the sources of employment change? Is it possible to foster a shared vision of community well-being among these often competing perspectives of Jasper townsite and the National Park? Population and migration data described in this section, play a role in the debate about the ongoing sustainability of this community.

2.7 Discussion

From an ecosystem perspective, one of the first measures of species health is species population, in that extremely large populations, extremely small populations, or rapid population changes can signal trouble. The same can be said for the human population in a forest ecosystem, where a variety of push and pull factors contribute to growth and decline. Environmental health, recreational and education opportunities, employment conditions, amenities, among many other factors influence the dynamics of human populations within an ecosystem. Here we have reported basic facts about population size and migration for the past 35 years. We have also provided some perceptions of these indicators from residents of Hinton and Jasper. On the whole, human populations in the Foothills Model Forest have increased quite substantially since 1961, with short bursts of growth from time to time and then periods of stability. Migration remains relatively high in the Foothills Model Forest, compared with the provincial average, indicating a degree of transience traditionally associated with resource-dependent communities. Although this information alone does not connote general human well-being, these indicators along with other indicators of community sustainability will be examined in this document to provide an encompassing view of well-being among human communities in the Foothills Model Forest.

2.8 Appendix

2.8.1 *Hinton: Community Perspectives on Population and Migration*

> Here, once you retired, you left almost immediately to go back to whereever you wanted to retire. Now we even have people that leave here and come back. We have retired people who move here to be close to their grandchildren. And our retirement population just keeps climbing. We have people who love the summers here and if they don't like the cold weather of winter they just go south for the winter. The old people will not move away and the new technology people will have to move in so, although the mine is a replacement mine, we're going to have an increase in population because lots will retire and stay and lots of new people will come in. ***Town Officer***

> Sure, years ago, it was nice to see the bush, but you had a small-scale operation and very few people, and they fit right into the country. Now, more people are coming in, and towns are getting bigger. How do we know that in 20 years from now, the population won't double here. And jobs? Where are they going to go? What are they going to do? ***Forest Industry Employee***

> I've used the forest for the last 20, I see the change of land use itself. Like when we used to come to Cadomin for Christmas 15 years ago there would be five people there. Now there's probably 500 people there. In the last 15 years in the Edson/Hinton area, and not Hinton as much as Edson, but especially ....

We have 2 mills here now. We didn't have a mill before so the influx of employment—the whole issue of that resource wasn't here before and government wouldn't have heard any complaints from Edson because they weren't doing anything. Now all of a sudden the forest industry in Edson employs probably 10, 15% of the people, it would be a pretty big issue. ***Resource Industry Educator***

I don't even think that transience is true. I think it's just a perception. Years ago it used to be true but I don't think we have near the level of transience in this community that we think we do. Most of the jobs are full-time permanent. They're not seasonal except for maybe some in forestry. But there is still that idea that you come to Hinton for a while to make money and then go. One thing our church has found in the last few years is we have a benevolent fund that has been tapped like never before. We emptied our benevolent fund in the first 3 months of the year and a lot of that is transient people coming through. Lots of them are going to Jasper to look for work. We've talked a lot about this at ministerial meetings, the way we are helping out people in the community. And closing the gaps between where social assistance doesn't meet the needs anymore where it used to before cutbacks. And the churches are being asked more and more to fill that need. We are just finding that we don't have the resources. It's been a real problem. ***Clergy***

It has always been very transient. Even as a teenager I remember that. Very transient yeah. I think that's a problem though, because some of those people come in and cause trouble. Sell their dope or whatever till it gets too hot and then leave again. ***Businessperson***

We really like that it's still a friendly community. It was even more so 18 years ago because we knew almost everybody in town. At that time there were really very few grandparents. That was one thing we really noticed that the population was very young. Now people are older. Our kids have been raised here so this is going to be home for them. ***Public Service Employee***

When I first moved here, there were about 250 and in a matter of about 5 years it was well over 5,000. They were all young couples with kids. That's why there were so many [kids in the school]. ***Senior Citizen***

Question: **Can you identify some of the trends you see in the population of Hinton over the years. Youth trends, education, *etc.*?**

Answer: I think up until the 1970s, I think we held the distinction of having the youngest average age of any town or city in Alberta. We lost that to Fort McMurray. They hold that record. It was 39 years which is a very young population. I don't think we are anywhere near that. We are closer up to the mid 40s because people have come and stayed. The trend is to make it a permanent home. Not a transient town. ***Senior Citizen***

I would say not a lot are long-term Hinton residents but are trying to come in and..... the word is out to go to Cheviot so people come here on a hope and a dream that things are going to be better. A lot of Easterners. There are a lot of people from Newfoundland out here which I think is really neat. ***Social Services Employee***

I think this community seems to be a young community and seniors, there doesn't seem to be a lot of people in the middle range which I think has a lot to do with the mill being 40 years old because the people that came to Hinton when they were young and started working here are now all senior citizens and there is a really big influx of new people so you find a lot of people around the age of 30 with young families and then you find a lot of people who are 60-65 years of age. When I look at a lot of the head operators at the mill they are 30-35 years of age or they are on the verge of retiring. You don't find a huge number of people that are in between. In my department I am one of the oldest and I am 31, so we have a lot of new, young engineers in. You do see a spread there. A lot of the old people aren't leaving town. They keep a home here for the summer and in the winter maybe go to Phoenix. ***Female Resource Industry Employee***

Population will be a really big one. Before expansion we were probably around 8000 people and now we are closer to 10,000 and maybe moving on to 11,000 so I think that will be a big thing in the next few years. I think in the last few years we have seen a lot of development like hotels because Jasper isn't growing and people are finding that this is a really nice place to holiday and we are getting the overflow so we are finding that the motels and that sort of thing are really booked up over the summer a lot of people coming through in the summer and I think that is going to be more of a concern in the future. I don't foresee the mines or the mill, Cheviot has been a really big thing as well in our town and in the event that Cheviot doesn't go through, which I can't really imagine happening, would have a huge impact on this town. If you think that 200-300 people losing their jobs and having to leave, that would have a big impact, the mill closing would have a lot bigger impact than that but that is not foreseeable. ***Female Resource Industry Employee***

Question: Would you consider this a transient community?

Answer: It used to be a number of years ago but I don' t think it is now. ***Educator***

I think that is what draws people here. We have a 2-year turnover of between 10 and 15%, which is quite high. I think that certainly the money is what attracts them. I know people who have been here for a while and then moved away and then came back, I know other people who have been here for 6 months and couldn't wait to shake the dust. Other people who came for 6 months and have been here for as long as I have. I don't know. We are at last starting to get some third-generation families which, when we came here, was quite rare. ***Social Services Employee***

One major change in the community is the aging population. When Hinton was first starting out, they were concerned about schools and maternity wards. Now the community is discussing long-term care facilities for the elderly. The "55ers" (people that came to Hinton in 1955) are retiring now and they are staying in the community. Their children are able to get jobs in the community so they stay. This accounts for the increase in the amount of housing in the community with little population growth. In the 1980s, there was a recession in the east of Canada and a lot of easterners moved to Hinton in search of work. The community has been more stable over the last 10 years and there are now second and third generations here in the community. ***Medical Professional***

I don't know. It makes you wonder, you know. These apartments are all going to be sitting empty. A lot of people are from apartments, and able to buy a house, because interest rates are down. I don't know, but to me, it seems to be an awful lot of.... when you sit back and you think of what's happened in the last 5 years. There hasn't been a thousand people come into the town in the last 5 years, if you look back at the statistics here from the town office. The population hasn't gone up that much in the last 5 years....maybe a hundred, two hundred you know. One year up and one year down. I don't know. ***Businessperson***

2.8.2 *Jasper: Community Perspectives on Population and Migration*

I guess we do a lot of planning now because we are starting to recognize that the transient population is really influential on the community. It was unwise not to plan for them and I think over the years most of these tourism towns haven't planned and there are some real problems around that. It's not the same people but they are the same numbers all the time. I would say that I would see them (transients) as part of the whole community. We do so many special initiatives with them because research has shown these people don't see themselves as regular parts of the community. ***Social Services Employee***

But it is acknowledged that the Canada census does lose a lot of people because of illegal suites and tourism population. There is always a local census. The last once showed a population of 5,414. I don't know the numbers yet for this year but the local census is always dramatically higher. ***Social Services Employee***

I don't think we've done a good job of accommodating our senior population yet. Ten percent of our population are seniors. We have an extended-care area but we don't have a place for seniors. People are looking at the Evergreen community in Hinton. There are seniors here who are quite able to take care of themselves but may not want to live in the single detached home. They are still vital contributors to the community. ***Hotel Operator***

Question: What was the population of Jasper in 1970s?

Answer: A bit over 4,000. And I think Banff was just a little bit more. At one time in Lake Louise we were 144 residents living there. We brought in TV and power. Government had its own light plant there. Now it's a lot different, eh? ***Senior Citizen***

One of the reasons we are losing our young people is because of permanent jobs and accommodation. If a young person comes in with a family and has to pay $1,500 or $1,000 a month rent, how can they save and see any future? And we don't have a very large population of affluent seniors here. You know we have railroad widows and we didn't have large pensions years ago. Very small pensions. Had their homes for 65 years. As far as the senior population goes, I don't know where I would put them in those three categories....Well the interesting thing about Jasper is that 10% of the population in Jasper are seniors. That's probably the highest percentage in the whole province of Alberta. It's a very large percentage. We love to be here. We like Jasper and everything about it, except the summer (laugh). It's just that you try to go shopping at 8 in the morning because otherwise it's just too rushed and busy. ***Senior Citizen***

What I would prefer is that a lot of that area remain undeveloped. As the population increases, there is going to be a demand for other services for the community. Might need another lawyer, doctor, offices or services up there rather than accommodation. ***Tourism Consultant***

The year-round population will be higher which is good for businesses I guess. Might mean more impact on town infrastructure. Sewer treatment plant is at capacity. So that might be a negative. As far as social integration, it might be a good thing that it's more of a year-round thing and people continue to get along. ***Parks Employee***

The seasonal population came out in two different areas and we got two diametrically opposed opinions from the same group of people. When it came to housing: "No, don't put them in my neighborhood." When it came to including them in the community it was like 'yeah we should be making them more a part of the community'. NIMBY. ***Businessperson***

There is a very low turnover rate at the Jasper CNR terminal. Jasper is a deluxe place to work. Not many people are being transferred out. The people that are new to the terminal from Edmonton or other cities are buying houses in Hinton because it is less expensive to live there. However, the people that are already working and living in Jasper will not move to Hinton even though it is less expensive to live there. Most people are moving west to Valemont from Jasper, not many people go east. ***Hospital Employee***

Jasper is not representative of the rest of the world. There are very few minorities in the town. The Koreans came about 7 years ago, there were about 15 families that moved in to town over a 5-year period. They were ripped off at every turn. They paid way too much for their houses and their businesses. The people of Jasper then blamed them for the increase in the housing market. The elderly people of Jasper thought that they were going to turn it into another Banff. ***Businessperson***

You should never believe that a small town is a safe place, I think we have the same problems that other towns have, but there is certainly, in the past increasing numbers of rape or sexual assault or any kind of assault in the summer because there is more of a transient population and people are coming in from wherever to Vancouver. There I think it becomes a little bit more unsafe. It seems to become more unsafe. It affects everyone. ***Child Care Employee***

It takes a long time before, if you come here as a staff member, like for me for example. I came here as a transient staff member, I would never be called a local, even up to a year ago, and that is just because my fiancé was born and raised in Jasper so people have started to associate me with him. It is really, the locals don't like to call other people locals, I find, it is pretty tight knit....There are people who only stay for 4 or 5 years. There are also the people who are transferred here for the train or for Telus or for Alberta Power who just work for as long as their contract might be. The long-term locals, short term, mainly called transients or staff. There are certainly people in between that don't fit either category but we don't have a label for it. You are not quite accepted as a local but people know you are no longer just transient staff, they know that you have been around but maybe aren't willing quite yet to give you the "local" term. ***Tourist Industry Employee***

2.8.3 Census Tables

Table 2.1 Population Statistics: Canada, Alberta and Census Subdivisions, 1961-1991.

	Census Divisions	1996	1991	1986	1981	1971	1961
Study Areas	Hinton	9,961	9,046	8,629	8,342	4,911	3,529
	YH94	9,352	8,692	8,590	9,238	7,493	7,735
	Jasper	4,301	3,567	3,927	3,422	2,791	2,360
	Foothills	23,614	21,305	21,146	21,002	15,195	10,624
Comparison	Edson	7,399	7,323	7,323	5,835	3,818	3,198
Areas	Grande Cache	4,441	3,842	3,646	4,523	2,525	
	Whitecourt	7,783	6,938	5,737	5,585	3,202	1,054
	Edmonton	616,306	616,741	573,982	532,246	438,152	281,027
	Alberta	2,696,826	2,545,553	2,365,825	2,237,724	1,627,874	1,823,247
	Canada	28,846,761	27,296,859	24,083,495	24,083,495	21,568,311	18,238,247

Note: Census boundary changed for Jasper in 1996. 1991 numbers were changed to reflect this change in boundary

Table 2.2 Percentage Change, for Canada, Alberta, and Census Subdivisions

Census Divisions	1991–1996	1986–1991	1981–1986	1981–1991	1971–1981	1961–1971
Hinton	10.1	4.8	3.4	8.4	69.9	39.2
YH94	7.6	1.2	-7.0	-5.9	23.0	58.0
Jasper	20.6	-7.8	14.8	5.8	22.6	18.3
Foothills	10.6	1.7	0.7	1.0	38.2	43.0
Edson	1.0	0.0	25.5	25.5	52.8	19.4
Grande Cache	15.6	5.4	-19.4	-15.1	79.1	100
Whitecourt	12.2	20.9	2.7	20.9	74.4	203.8
Edmonton	-0.1	7.4	7.8	7.4	21.5	55.9
Alberta	5.9	7.6	5.7	7.6	37.5	22.2
Canada	5.7	7.9	5.1	7.9	11.7	18.3

Table 2.3a Male Population by Age Cohorts, 1996

Census Divisions	Male Population	Male Pop. % of Tl. pop.	0–14 yrs Male	15–19 yrs Male	30–44 yrs Male	45–59 yrs Male	60–74 yrs Male	75+ yrs Male
Hinton	5,130	51.5	1,335	1,130	1,495	605	345	50
YH94	4,955	53.0	1,160	900	1,255	960	555	130
Jasper	2,215	51.5	335	715	740	255	140	25
Foothills	12,300	52.1	2,830	2,745	3,490	1,820	1,040	205
Edson	3,730	50.4	960	860	1,045	525	260	95
Grande Cache	2,405	54.2	585	575	695	425	100	10
Whitecourt	4,155	53.4	1,180	1,090	1,235	485	130	20
Edmonton	302,765	49.1	64,735	68,590	82,245	47,595	29,730	9,870
Alberta	1,348,300	50.0	315,125	291,420	360,980	215,970	122,010	42,805
Canada	14,170,025	49.1	3,025,210	2,960,465	3,624,695	2,490,965	1,524,235	544,460

Table 2.3b Female Population by Age Cohorts, 1996

Census Divisions	Female Population	Female Pop. % of Tl. pop.	0–14 yrs Female	15–19 yrs Female	30–44 yrs Female	45–59 yrs Female	60–74 yrs Female	75+ yrs Female
Hinton	4,835	48.5	1,295	1,130	1,380	670	280	80
YH94	440	47.0	1,135	760	1,205	795	380	120
Jasper	2,090	48.5	330	720	610	220	135	75
Foothills	11,325	47.9	2,760	2,610	3,195	1,685	795	275
Edson	3,665	49.5	945	810	1,010	455	290	165
Grande Cache	2,035	45.8	550	485	590	325	70	20
Whitecourt	3,630	46.6	1,065	905	1,095	410	120	45
Edmonton	313,545	50.9	62,065	69,730	81,305	48,660	34,220	17,550
Alberta	1,348,520	50.0	299,370	284,280	356,125	210,825	130,380	67,545
Canada	14,676,735	50.9	2,876,065	2,927,385	3,705,245	2,521,140	1,725,450	921,450

Table 2.4a Percentage of Total Male Population by Age Cohorts, 1996

Census Divisions	0–14 yrs	15–29 yrs	30–44 yrs	45–59 yrs	60–74 yrs	75+ yrs
	Age group categories as a percent of total male population in area					
Hinton	26.0	22.0	29.1	11.8	6.7	1.0
YH94	23.4	18.2	25.3	19.4	11.2	2.6
Jasper	15.1	32.3	33.4	11.5	6.3	1.1
Foothills	23.0	22.3	28.4	14.8	8.5	1.7
Edson	25.7	23.1	28.0	14.1	6.9	2.5
Grande Cache	24.3	23.9	28.9	17.7	4.1	0.4
Whitecourt	28.4	26.2	29.7	11.7	3.1	0.5
Edmonton	21.4	22.7	27.2	15.7	9.8	3.3
Alberta	23.4	21.6	26.8	16.0	9.0	3.2
Canada	21.3	20.9	25.6	17.6	10.8	3.8

Table 2.4b Percentage of Total Male Population by Age Cohorts, 1996

Census Divisions	0 -14 yrs	15 - 29 yrs	30 - 44 yrs	45 - 59 yrs	60 - 74 yrs	75= yrs
	Age group categories as a percent of total female population in area					
Hinton	26.8	23.4	28.5	13.9	5.8	1.7
YH #94	25.8	17.3	27.4	18.1	8.6	2.7
Jasper	15.8	34.4	29.2	10.5	6.5	3.6
Foothills	24.4	23.0	28.2	14.9	7.0	2.4
Edson	25.8	22.1	27.6	12.4	7.9	4.5
Grande Cache	27.0	23.8	28.9	16	3.4	0.9
Whitecourt	29.3	24.9	30.2	11.3	3.3	1.2
Edmonton	19.8	22.2	25.9	15.5	10.9	5.6
Alberta	22.2	21.1	26.4	15.6	9.7	5.0
Canada	19.6	19.9	25.2	17.2	11.8	6.3

Table 2.5a Percentage of Total Male Population by Age Groups, 1996

Census Divisions	Total Male Population by Age Group					Percent of Total			
	Total	0–14	15–39	40–64	65+ yrs	0–14	15–39	40–64	65+ yrs
Hinton	5,130	1,335	2,170	1,385	250	26.0	42.3	27.0	4.9
YH94	4,955	1,160	1,690	1,675	435	23.4	34.1	33.8	8.8
Jasper	2,215	335	1,235	530	110	15.1	55.8	23.9	4.9
Foothills	12,300	2,830	5,095	3,590	795	23.0	41.4	29.2	6.5
Edson	3,730	960	1,605	935	245	25.7	43	25.1	6.6
Grande Cache	2,405	585	1,075	680	50	24.3	44.7	28.3	2.1
Whitecourt	4,155	1,180	1,635	890	110	28.4	39.4	21.4	2.6
Edmonton	302,765	64,735	125,690	84,135	28,205	21.4	41.5	27.8	9.3
Alberta	1,348,300	315,125	537,960	378,405	116,820	23.4	39.9	28.1	8.7
Canada	14,170,025	3,025,210	5,440,165	4,216,830	1,487,825	21.3	38.4	29.8	10.5

Table 2.5b Percentage of Total Female Population by Age Groups

Census Divisions	Total Female Population by Age Group					Percent of Total			
	Total	0–14	15–39	40–64	65+ yrs	0–14	15–39	40–64	65+ yrs
Hinton	4,835	1,295	2,125	1,180	235	26.8	43.9	24.4	4.9
YH94	4,400	1,135	1,550	1,380	330	25.8	35.2	31.4	7.5
Jasper	2,090	330	1,170	435	155	15.8	56.0	20.8	7.4
Foothills	11,325	2,760	4,845	2,995	720	24.4	42.8	26.4	6.4
Edson	3,665	945	1,525	850	355	25.8	41.6	23.2	9.7
Grande Cache	2,035	550	895	545	50	27	44	26.8	2.5
Whitecourt	3,630	1,065	1,725	735	115	29.3	47.5	20.2	3.2
Edmonton	313,545	62,065	126,140	85,825	39,500	19.8	40.2	27.4	12.6
Alberta	1,348,520	299,370	530,015	369,060	150,080	22.2	39.3	27.4	11.1
Canada	14,676,735	2,876,065	5,459,950	4,300,700	2,040,020	19.6	37.2	29.3	13.9

Table 2.6 Hinton, Age Group, Total Population, 1981 to 1996

	Total	Total Population by Age Group							
		0–14	15–24	25–4	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+ yrs
1996	9,961	2,630	1,485	1,765	1,885	1,115	610	355	130
1991	9,045	2,500	1,325	1,900	1,575	860	550	250	100
1986	8,625	2,470	1,455	1,930	1,255	780	480	185	60
1981	8,342	2,515	1,795	1,770	1,010	705	365	90	95
		Percent of Total by Age Group							
1996	100	26.4	14.9	17.7	18.9	11.1	6.1	3.6	1.3
1991	100	27.6	14.6	21.0	17.4	9.5	6.1	2.8	1.1
1986	100	28.6	16.9	22.4	14.6	9.0	5.6	2.1	0.7
1981	100	30.1	21.5	21.2	12.1	8.5	4.4	1.1	1.1

Table 2.7 1986 Population Statistics for YH 94

Community	Population	Community	Population
Cadomin	107	Niton Junction	99
Calvert	19	Nojack	19
Entrance	79	Old Entrance	9
Eritie	21	Pedley	31
Hanconville	25	Peers	138
Hornbeck	36	Pinedale Subdivision	70
Mackay	22	Pine Shadows	135
Mariboro	183	Robb	194
Mercoal	4	Wildwood	377
Mountain View Estates	48	Wolf Creek Subdivision	32

Table 2.8a Mobility Status, 1996

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH94	Jasper
Total Population 1 year + by place of residence 1 year ago	28,155,225	2,631,840	9,810	9,245	4,200
Non-movers	22,108,675	2,135,735	7,615	8,240	2,910
Movers	4,322,225	496,105	2,200	1,005	1,295
Intraprovincial movers	3,767,630	112,285	585	395	200
Interprovincial movers	319,200	54,690	315	90	365
External movers	235,395	18,730	0	15	65
Total population 5 years + by place of residence 5 years ago	26,604,135	2,474,855	9,090	8,745	4,030
Non-movers	15,079,415	1,244,925	3,915	5,830	1,930
Movers	11,524,725	1,229,930	5,175	2,910	2,095
Non-migrants	6,130,735	705,840	2,760	1,080	735
Migrants	5,393,985	524,090	2,410	1,830	1,360
Internal migrants	4,465,295	453,840	2,385	1,775	1,285
Intraprovincial migrants	3,575,025	291,200	1,470	1,345	510
Interprovincial migrants	890,270	162,640	910	430	775
External migrants	928,690	70,250	20	55	80

Table 2.8b Mobility Status, 1991

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH94	Jasper
Total Population 1 year + by place of residence 1 year ago	26,430,895	2,454,685	8,925	8,515	3,300
Non-movers	22,108,675	1,929,955	6,915	7,595	2,470
Movers	4,322,225	524,730	2,020	915	835
Intraprovincial movers	3,767,630	439,360	1,550	750	620
Interprovincial movers	319,200	63,015	415	150	190
External movers	235,395	22,355	50	20	20
Total population 5 years + by place of residence 5 years ago	24,927,870	2,291,070	8,255	7,940	3,100
Non-movers	13,290,685	1,081,105	3,420	5,210	1,460
Movers	11,637,185	1,209,960	4,835	2,735	1,640
Non-migrants	5,776,215	668,220	2,215	1,335	760
Migrants	5,860,970	541,745	2,625	1,390	880
Internal migrants	4,947,645	466,860	2,500	1,355	830
Intraprovincial migrants	3,970,600	296,845	1,375	1,080	425
Interprovincial migrants	977,050	170,015	1,120	270	405
External migrants	913,320	74,890	125	45	50

Table 2.8c Mobility Status, 1986

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH94	Jasper
Total population 5 years + by mobility status	23,189,245	2,133,860	7,735	7,525	3,670
Non-movers	13,053,240	1,039,285	3,325	4,825	1,440
Movers	10,136,005	1,094,575	4,410	2,695	2,230
Non-migrants	5,622,150	599,690	2,510	1,275	910
Migrants	4,513,855	494,890	1,900	1,425	1,325
From same census division	980,240	89,050	120	285	15
From same province	2,145,215	172,565	990	955	530
From different province	924,490	177,285	725	165	730
From outside Canada	463,905	55,985	65	20	40

Table 2.8d Mobility Status, 1981

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH94	Jasper
Population 5 years +	22,280,070	2,024,345	7,460	8,300	3,220
Non-movers	11,672,825	810,005	1,950	4,000	1,300
Movers	10,607,250	1,214,340	5,510	4,305	1,920
Non-migrants	5,538,795	522,365	2,270	1,805	660
Migrants	5,068,450	691,970	3,245	2,495	1,260
Total in-migrants	4,512,255	336,830	3,065	2,470	1,120
From same province	3,371,725		1,170	1,570	385
From same census division			100	290	10
From different census division			1,065	1,280	370
From different province	1,140,530	336,825	1,900	900	740
From outside Canada		75,485	175	30	140
Total out-migrants	556,200	139,180	2,305	430	1,570
To same province			1,315	340	815
To same census division			165	115	10
To different census division			1,150	220	800
To different province		139,180	990	85	750
Net internal migrantion, 1976-1981		197,650	765	2,040	(450)

Chapter 3.
EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Objective

To determine employment conditions in the Foothills Model Forest by examining Statistics Canada data on employment and labor force participation and by studying employment patterns differentiated by sex, occupation, and full-time and part-time employment status. Aspects of employment in Jasper and Hinton are examined in further detail by interpreting Statistics Canada data with community perspectives on employment in the Foothills Model Forest.

3.2 Rationale

Indicators of employment and labor force participation provide an important source for understanding the health of a community. Healthy communities are marked by high labor force participation and low unemployment, indicating a condition where a large proportion of residents are in the labor force and can find gainful employment. In addition to employment and labor force participation rates, a healthy and productive community is concerned with other aspects of employment such as working conditions, employment stability, and compatibility with local levels of available human capital. These and other aspects of employment, combined with employment statistics, provide a multi-dimensional perspective on the regional labor market.

3.3 Employment as an Indicator

Among studies monitoring community sustainability, the *unemployment rate* is one of the most frequent sources of comparative information (Beckley and Burkosky, 1999). The unemployment rate measures the number of people in a given labor market who are unable to find a job. The basic premise is that healthy communities generate an adequate number of jobs for labor force participants. If the unemployment rate is high, then people may be forced to work in conditions that underutilize their skills and abilities. Or, they may be forced to relocate to other communities in search of work. When employees are chronically underutilized—either not working at a level compatible with their education or working less frequently than they prefer—the employee is technically defined as *underemployed*.

3.3.1 Measurement Shortcomings

When Statistics Canada measures unemployment, it refers to persons 15 years of age and over who are without paid work and are available for work and either:

(a) have actively looked for work in the past 4 weeks; or
(b) are on temporary lay-off and expect to return to their job; or
(c) have definite arrangements to start a new job in 4 weeks or less.

As a statistic designed to measure participants in the labor market who are actively searching for work, the unemployment rate (as typically counted) has certain shortcomings. The most obvious of these are associated with accurately measuring underemployment and non-participation in the labor force. Measuring these conditions with unemployment data is rendered difficult for several reasons: (a) workers may not be counted as job seekers when pressured into early retirement or contract work. (b) The so-called *silent reserve*, or discouraged job seekers, only start to look for work when the job market improves. (c) Temporary employment schemes, often sponsored by federal and provincial governments, take increasingly large numbers out of the *normal* labor market for a while. (d) Many workers are underemployed by being on short-term work assignments or in occupations requiring skill sets that underutilize their abilities.

A more complete measure of unemployment would include some measure of these conditions but, because of the subjectivity involved in the conditions mentioned above, current calculations simply include the proportion of labor market participants in search of work. To complicate the issue further, the seasonality of employment in some industries and the frequency of employment data collection at the local level will also affect the accuracy of employment statistics. For instance, in smaller rural centers, census data is reported every 5-year period, although the rate of unemployment in a tourism town may fluctuate significantly over the course of one calendar year[3].

3.3.2 *Theories of Development*

High unemployment is accompanied by certain social costs. These costs included a higher incidence of poverty, demoralization, and strains on family relationships. For society as a whole, the social costs include the failure to realize returns from the social investment in human capital made through the educational system, and a loss of tax revenue combined with increased expenditures on unemployment benefits that threaten the financing of other parts of the welfare system (Abercrombie and Turner, 1988).

In the statistical definition of unemployment, analysts normally expect a relatively constant and low rate of unemployment. Some level of unemployment is expected as people make transitions from one job market to another or enter and exit the job market. If a job market is fairly stable with minimal employment transition from one sector to another, unemployment should be relatively low. If, on the other hand, the economy is going through a large transition in skill requirements, people are moving from one sector of the economy to another, then higher unemployment rates are likely.

On a national scale, the unemployment rate continues to hover around 10% which many analysts and policy makers consider to be unacceptably high. There are essentially two polarized views on the future of work in Canadian society[4]. The first view attributes high unemployment to temporary structural shifts in labor force activity. These shifts often take place in response to major advances in technology as experienced during the industrial revolution and more recently in the transition to the information age. During these shifts, unemployment can be high but will eventually return to a low and stable level. Using this rationale in the Canadian context, high unemployment is caused by the fairly dramatic shift in the Canadian economy away from a traditional employment base in fishing, mining, forestry, and manufacturing, toward high-technology and service sector jobs (Power, 1996). Jobs created in the new economy would include everything from computer programmers to sales clerks. As long as the transition continues, unemployment rates will remain high but then, as the transition slows and people gain skills appropriate to expanding sectors, unemployment should return to a *nominal* rate reflecting stable economic conditions. A return to near full employment driven by service-sector expansion is based in theories of modernization during late stages of capitalist development (Kenney *et al.*, 1989; Falk & Lyson, 1988). If in fact this reorganization of economic activity is occurring in the Foothills Model Forest, then one might expect a period of high unemployment followed by lower unemployment levels over the long term.

Another theory, developed in direct opposition to the theory of market reorganization and a return to stable employment, comes out of a large body of literature generally defined as dependency theory. Although not directly tied to this development theory, the seminal work of Rex Lucas (1971) in *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown* takes a critical perspective on resource towns in Canada. In this text, Lucas paints a clear picture of systematic exploitation in single-industry towns due to the inequitable relationship between *developed* and *underdeveloped* regions of the country. The most obvious example of underdevelopment in Canada is the relationship between Ontario and Quebec and the so-called *hinterland* of Atlantic Canada. Atlantic provinces are not centers of banking, industry, or commerce but, as resource-based economies, they are sources of wealth. Historically, this wealth is accumulated and reinvested outside the region, providing jobs and a higher standard of living to people residing outside the region. In the words of Ralph Matthews, "the traditional wealth of southern Ontario is certainly not attributable to any strong resource base there, as there are few resources within several hundred miles of the area. Conversely the Atlantic provinces have always had abundant iron ore, coal, gold, forest, fish, and hydroelectric power, but have remained poor" (Matthews 1982: 105). Under these conditions, major decisions about what to produce, how much to produce, and what prices to charge are often made outside the local economy, with little regard for ecosystem integrity and long-term sustainability of the resource base. In effect, external control deprives local residents from having a voice in determining the composition of their main economic and income-generating sectors. In addition, these underdeveloped regions are burdened with *declining terms of trade* which sees a more or less constant increase in the prices paid

[3] Statistics Canada reports employment data at provincial and regional levels on a monthly basis. Alberta includes eight reporting regions, but specific employment data for communities such as Hinton and Jasper are collected every 5 years.

[4] The two views on employment are expressed as ideal types — hypothetical constructions formed from real economic conditions that have xplanatory value. These perspectives may not be mutually exclusive and do not provide a detailed account of economic conditions, but rather suggest certain defining characteristics.

for imported producer goods and a concomitant decline in the prices of staple exports (Allahar, 1995). From the dependency viewpoint, major benefits from local economic activity will be realized outside the region—in centers such as Edmonton, Toronto, or the United States.

Resource-based communities are often characterized by segmented or dual labor markets. This means that, within a given resource-based community, there may be a primary labor market of stable, well-paying, resource-related jobs that are either technical or managerial in nature. The labor market for these jobs is at least regional, but likely national and international, as these positions require considerable skill and training. The secondary labor market consists of lower paying, less skilled work in a given resource sector. These are often the jobs that are replaced through technological developments in industries such as forestry and mining. As recently as the early 1960s, all the wood processed at the Hinton mill was cut by chainsaws and yarded with horses—clearly a more labor-intensive system than today's highly mechanized wood procurement system. The segmentation of labor markets has implications for both employment and earnings. Those in the primary labor market are less vulnerable to structural change, and therefore more secure. Those in the secondary labor markets are much more vulnerable as they are easy to replace with either machines or cheap labor. As some authors have described, this situation can lead to significant internal inequality in communities or regions (Bailey *et al.* 1996).

Overdevest & Green (1995) also highlight the fact that all types of work within a given sector are not equally desirable. In forestry, primary employment, *i.e.*, the stable well-paying jobs, tends to be in that segment of the forest industry characterized by the highest capitalization—namely the pulp and paper industry. This places Hinton in good standing relative to the forest sector. For other resource industries in the area, primary employment is not as prevalent. Both the coal mines and oil and gas industries ship a very raw form of product from the region. Processing, end use, and managerial jobs related to these industries are located outside the region.

Both of these theories—modernization and dependency—involve a movement or transition of workers. The first situation suggests a return to low unemployment while the second suggests continued levels of high unemployment. In the Foothills Model Forest, residents are employed in a variety of economic sectors and employment conditions, varying significantly from one economic sector to the next. This report will attempt to describe trends in employment and gain a local perspective on employment conditions in the past, present, and future.

3.4 Measuring Unemployment and Labor Force Participation

We begin this study of employment in the Foothills Model Forest by extracting specific information from Statistics Canada census data. Most recent census data on employment are available for the 1996 census and we track back through two previous census years (1986 and 1981) to gain a 15-year perspective. National and provincial data are also included for comparative purposes. Figure 3.1[5] shows the differential rate of unemployment for men and women by jurisdiction for 1996. Jasper reports the lowest overall unemployment rate of communities in this study, while the rate in Canada as a whole is higher than any jurisdiction within the Foothills Model Forest. Given that census data are collected during the busy tourist season of June, unemployment rates for Jasper are quite low. But if measured again in October, the data may tell a very different story. Another factor contributing to low unemployment in Jasper is the local *need to reside* policy that requires all park residents to have some legitimate reason for living within the park—such as employment or a business opportunity (see *Chapter 5.1, Poverty*). Overall, there appears to be a fairly prominent difference according to sex with respect to employment, especially in Jasper where twice as many women are unemployed. In Hinton, the opposite is true as unemployment among men is higher than among women.

Figures 3.2 through 3.6 depict trends in unemployment and labor force participation between 1981 and 1996. Figures 3.2 and 3.5 show a peak in unemployment for women and men in 1986, with a more noticeable drop in unemployment for men in Jasper after 1986. The jurisdiction of YH 94 experienced the least decline in male unemployment after 1986 when the rate was 10.2%, and in 1991 when the rate remained relatively high at 8.6%. Women in Hinton experienced a similar situation after 1986 when the unemployment rate actually increased from 7.9 to 8.1% (Figure 3.2). All other jurisdictions experienced a drop in the female unemployment rate after 1986.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B, Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada..

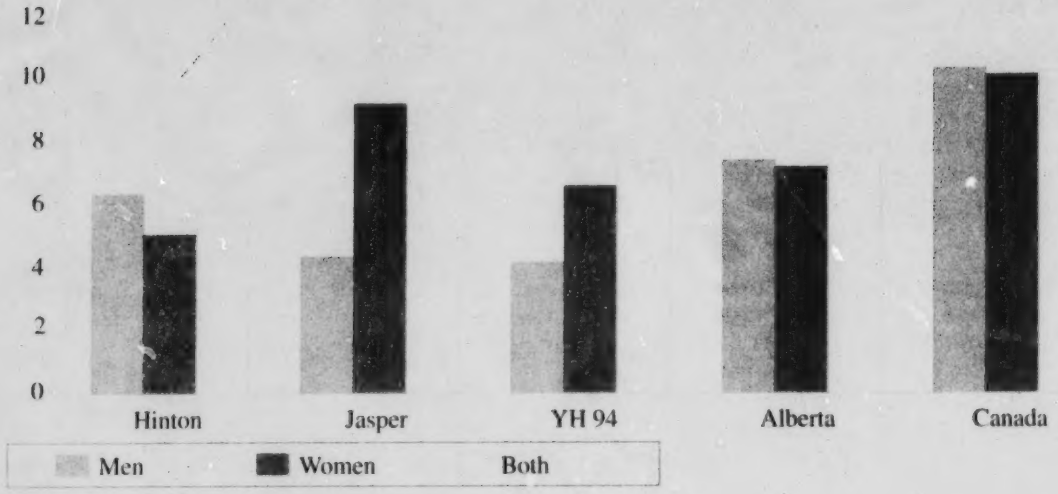

Figure 3.1 Unemployment rate, 1996.

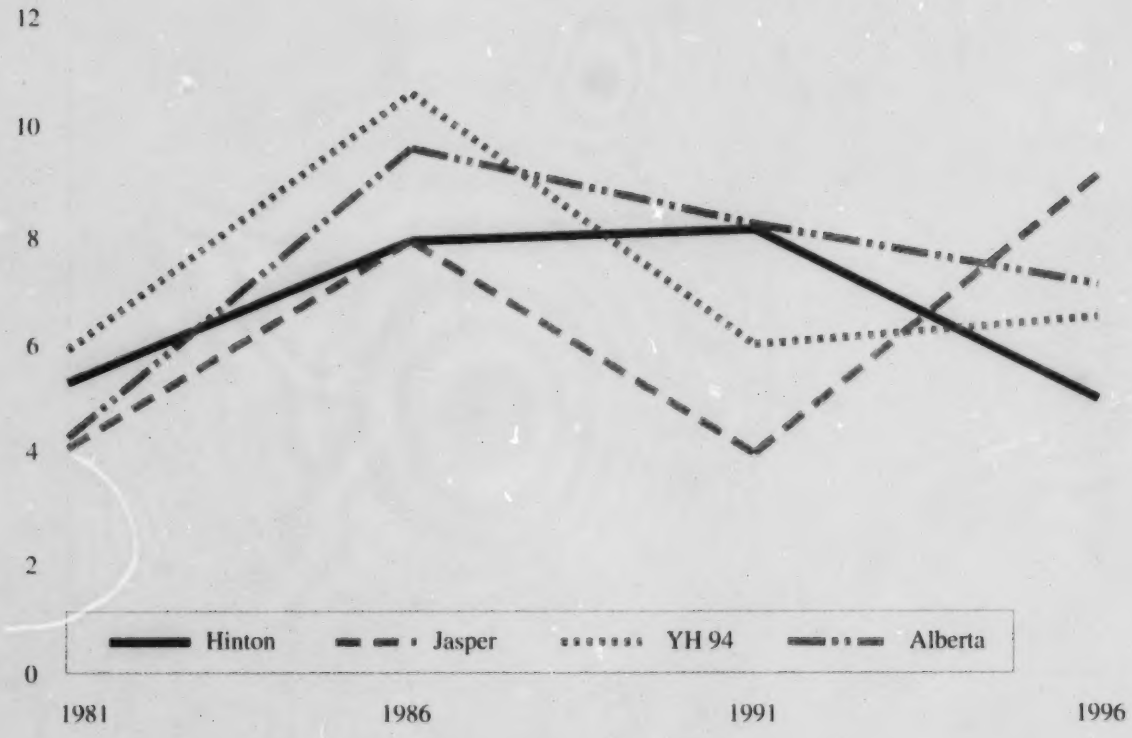

Figure 3.2 Changes in female unemployement rate, 1981–1996.

The interpretation of unemployment rates is incomplete without another crucial piece of information. Although the rate of unemployment provides a measure of those who are actively seeking employment, it does not provide an indication of labor force participation. In technical terms, *total labor force* refers to all persons 15 years of age and over who were either employed or unemployed during the week prior to Census Day. The unemployment rate measures those in the labor force without work[6]. This point is crucial because the unemployment rate does not measure those who are not counted as part of the labor force. Reasons for not participating are presented in Section 3.1.3. Both rates—unemployment and labor force participation—are required to provide a more precise picture of labor market activity. If Figure 3.3 is examined in conjunction with Figure 3.2, we observe gains made in overall female labor force participation and employment in the labor force between 1986 and 1996. Hinton for example, did not experience a drop in unemployment between 1986 and 1991, but it did experience some gain in overall female labor force participation. So, although unemployment stayed about the same, the total number of employed women actually increased.

YH 94 provides an interesting example of the relationship between employment, unemployment, and labor force participation. Figure 3.4a combines employment and labor force participation rates for YH 94 from 1986 (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). The result is a description of the entire female population of YH 94 related to labor force activity. When unemployment and participation rates are combined, the actual number of employed females as a percentage of total females becomes apparent. In 1986, just under 39% of women were employed in the labor force while exactly half did not participate in the labor market at all. This situation improved substantially between 1986 and 1996, where female labor force employment rose to 57% and unemployment dropped to 6.5%. Figure 3.4a demonstrates the need to combine these three data sets—that are often reported separately—to gain a more complete picture of employment conditions for men and women. It is important to do this because the composite picture can differ dramatically between the sexes and geographic locations. Figure 3.4b demonstrates the significant difference in employment conditions for men and women in this rural jurisdiction.

Figures 3.5 and 3.6 provide the same information on unemployment and labor force participation for males as Figures 3.2 and 3.3 do for females. Similar to female unemployment rates, male rates dropped in 1991 and further in 1996 (with the exception of Jasper) after peaking in 1986. An interesting point in Figure 3.5 is the striking drop in unemployment for Jasper after 1986. During the same 5-year period, Hinton and YH 94 made a modest recovery but failed to reach 1981 levels. Over the 10-year period, labor force participation rates in all jurisdictions remained relatively constant. Hinton and Jasper register high rates of participation at around 90% while YH 94 registers a lower male labor force participation rate, consistent with the Alberta average at around 80%. On their own, the stable labor force participation rates over the 10-year period suggest a fairly stable local economy. But taken together with fluctuating unemployment rates it may be more accurate to suggest that the Foothills economy, while continuing to provide steady employment opportunities, experienced a degree of labor market transition (see Section 3.1.3.2) in 1986 reflected in the higher rates of unemployment during that time.

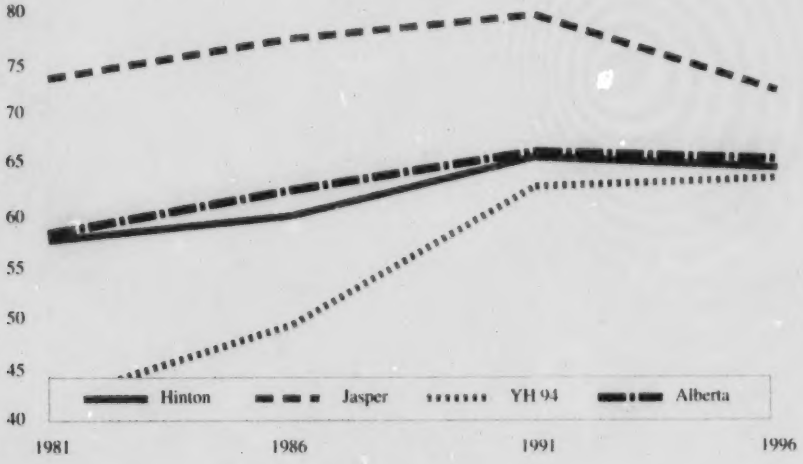

Figure 3.3 Female labor force participation rates, 1981–1996.

[6] Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates are adjusted to eliminate seasonal movements such as annual regular events like climate, holidays, vacation periods, and cyclical events like crops, production and retail sales associated with Christmas and Easter. Unemployment rates from the Canadian census are not seasonally adjusted.

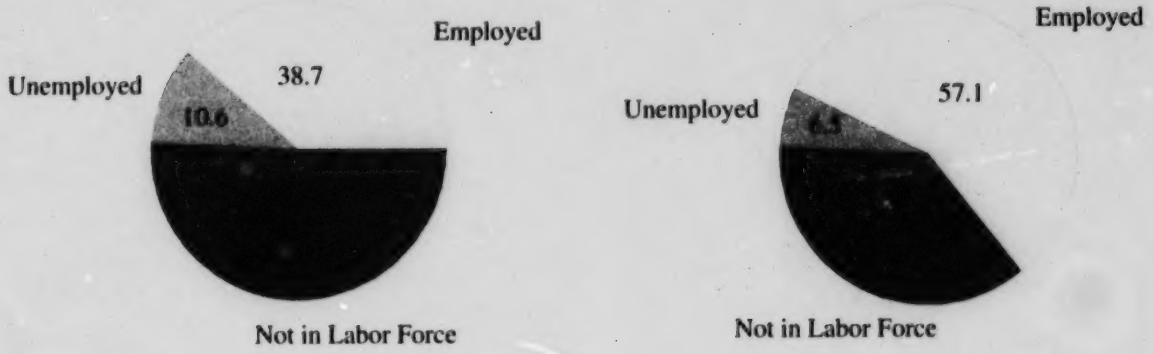

Figure 3.4a Female labor force activity in YH94, 1986, and 1996.

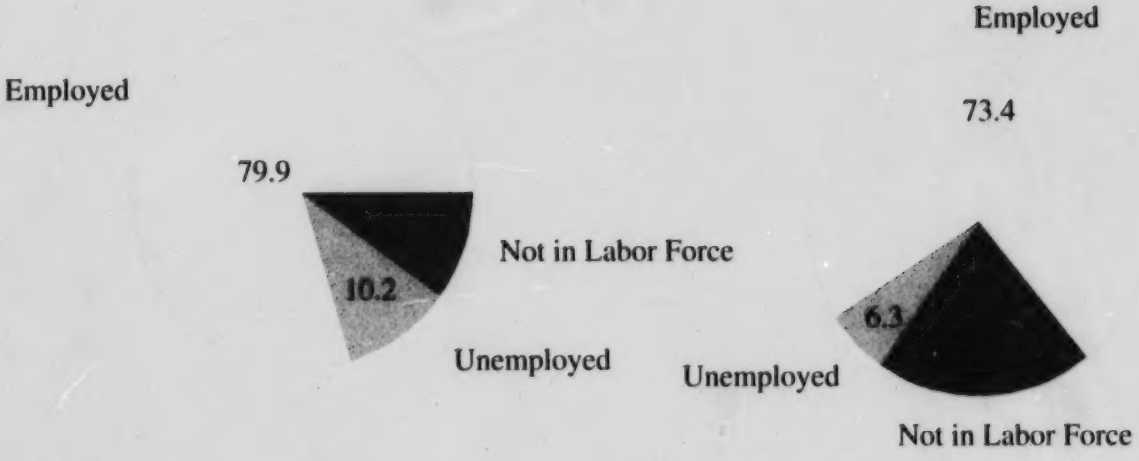

Figure 3.4b Male labor force activity in YH94, 1986, and 1996.

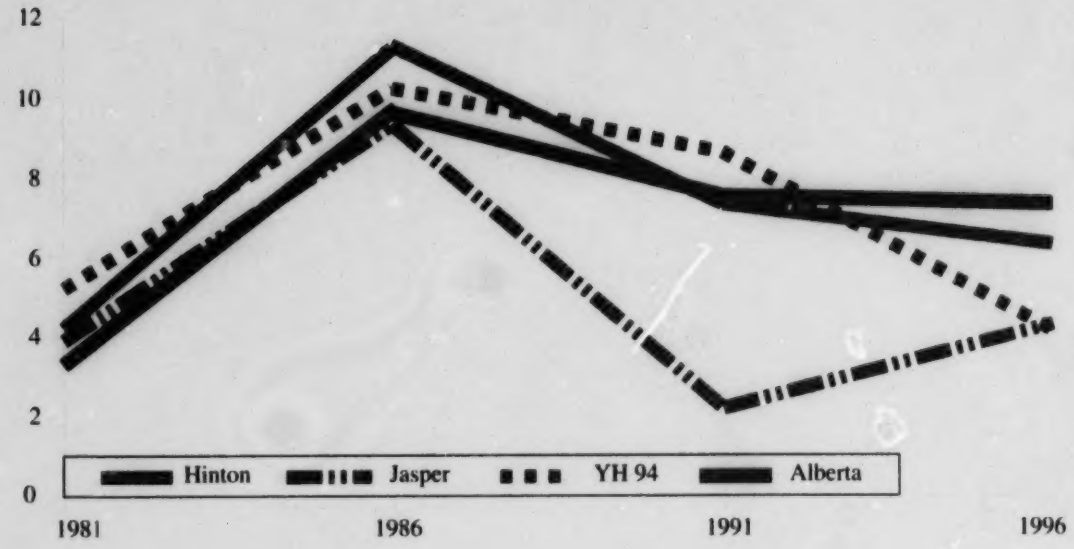

Figure 3.5 Change in male unemployment rate, 1981–1996.

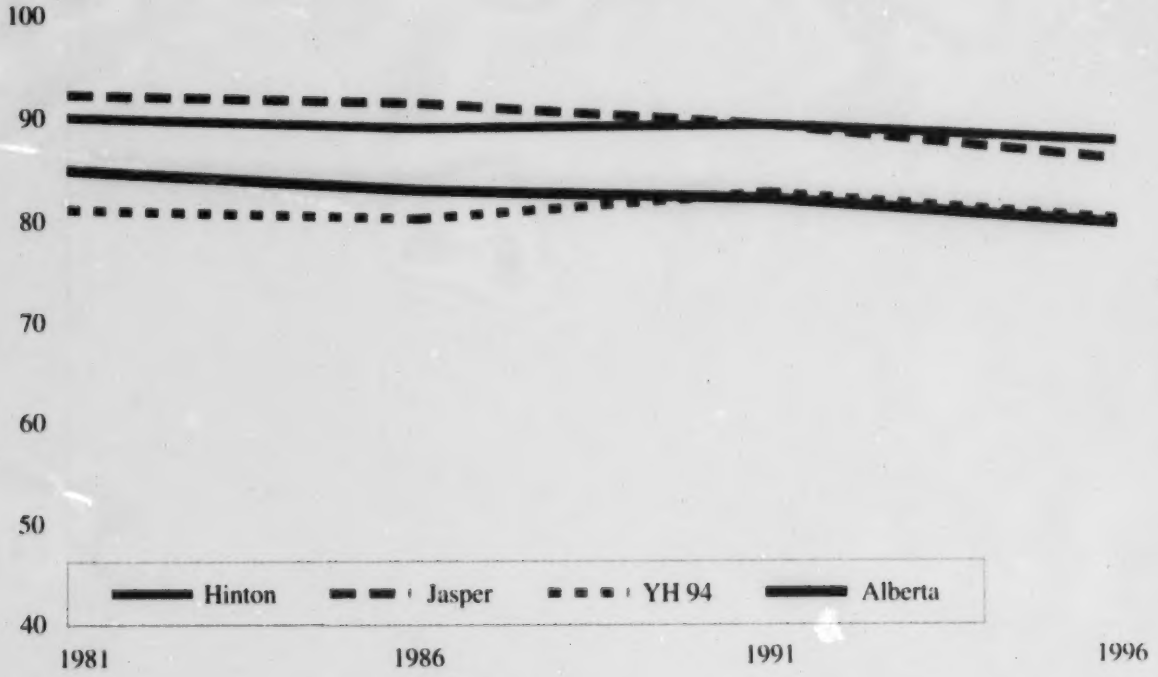

Figure 3.6 Male labor force participation rates, 1981–1996.

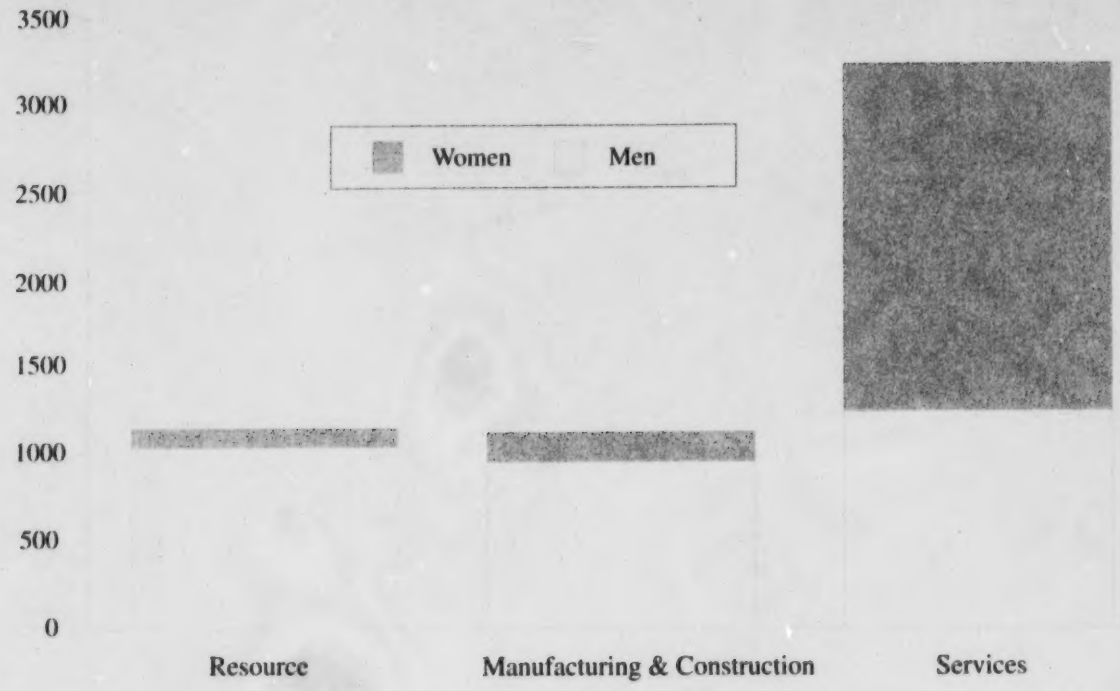

Figure 3.7 Participation in selected occupations by sex, Hinton, 1996.

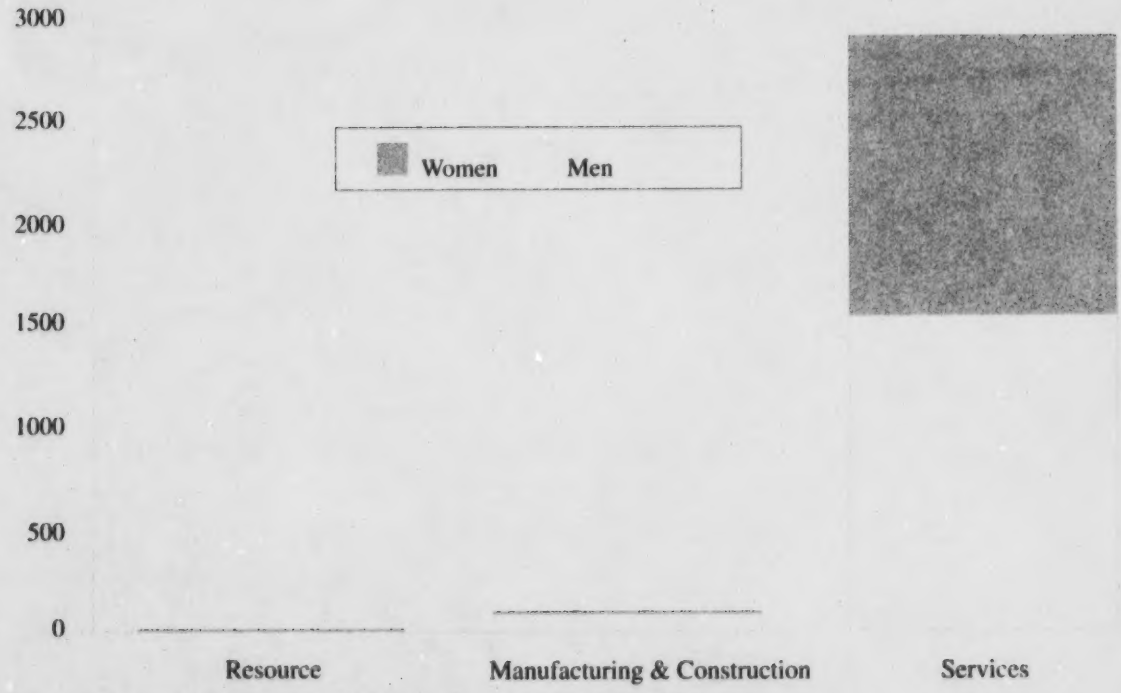

Figure 3.8 Participation in selected occupations by sex, Jasper, 1996.

Figure 3.9 Employment by industrial classification (SIC), 1996.

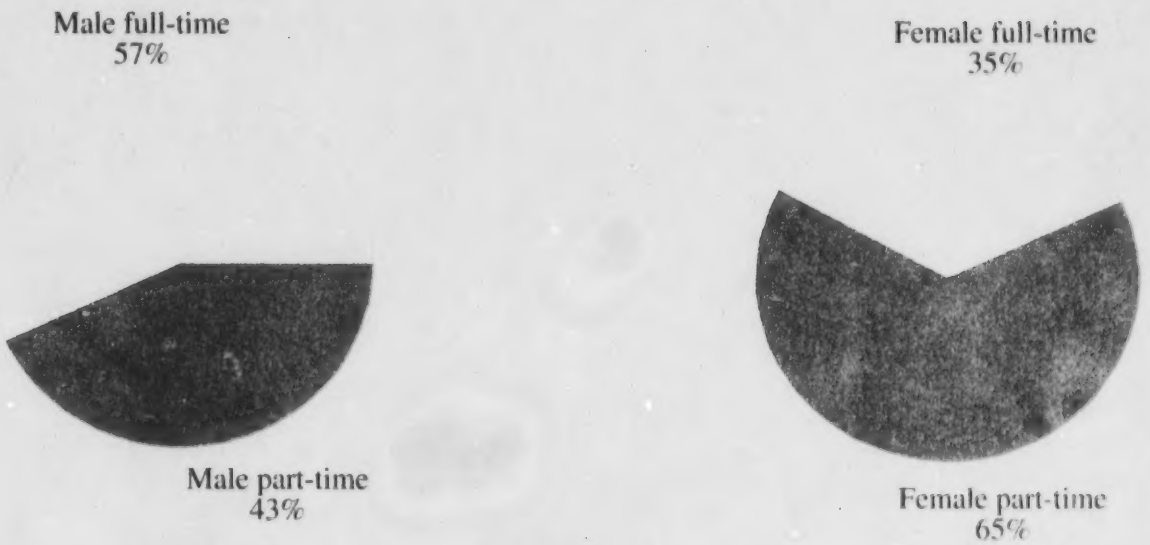

Figure 3.10 Jasper full- and part-time employment by sex, 1996.

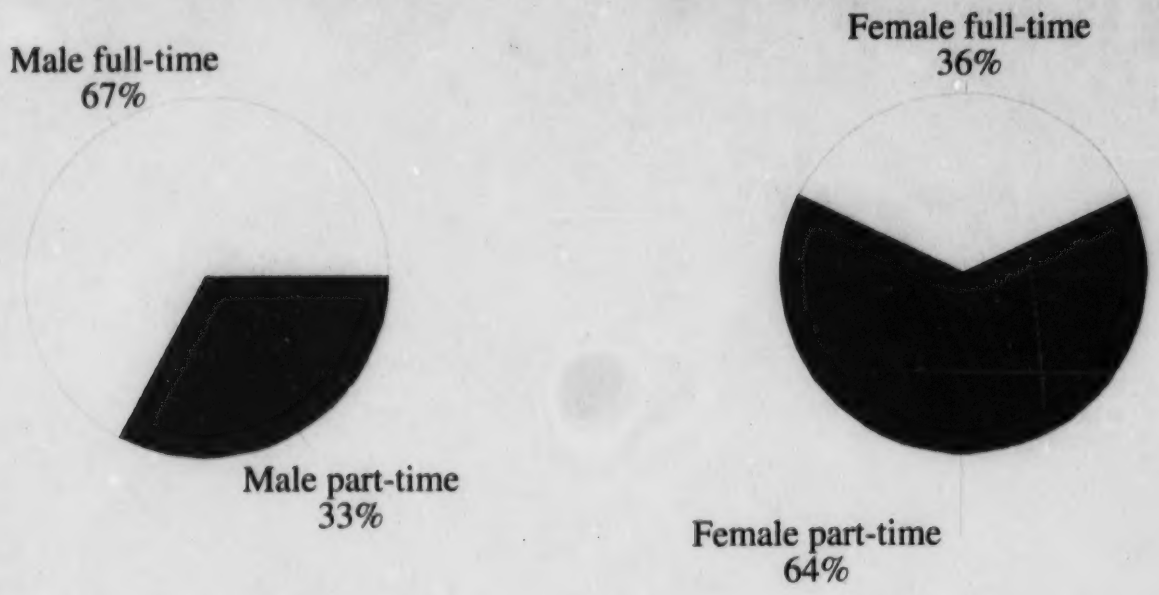

Figure 3.11 Hinton full- and part-time employment by sex, 1996.

In addition to unemployment and labor force participation rates, Statistics Canada provides a breakdown of employment by standard occupational classifications (SOCs). A detailed list of these occupations is provided in Appendix 3.8.3 (Table 3.3). For the purposes of this report, occupations are grouped together into three aggregate categories: resource industries, manufacturing and construction industries, and service industries. Service industries include sales, services, and managerial occupations. Figures 3.7 and 3.8 display the results of these groupings differentiated by sex and location. As expected, a sizeable proportion of Hinton residents are involved in resource industries. But perhaps less anticipated is the large number of employees, both men and women, in service industries. Predictably, a high proportion of Jasper residents are employed in service industries.

Figures 3.7 and 3.8 on occupational classification must be interpreted with some caution. Although these statistics differentiate the population by occupation, they do not differentiate by employer. In other words, a person may be classified as an employee in the service industry but there is no information about which industry (*e.g.*, construction or transportation) the person is working in. According to these occupational classifications (SOCs), the employee could be working for a local furniture store or selling lumber for *Hi-Atha*. Grouping by occupational field (instead of employer) restricts our ability to determine employment by industry. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the relatively small number of employees in occupations traditionally associated with the resource industry.

Figure 3.9 provides a labor force breakdown by standard industrial codes (SICs). This figure groups employees according to the industry for which they are working, regardless of occupation. In this way, we are able to observe labor force participation by specific industry.

As expected, most workers in Hinton are employed in primary industries and manufacturing, which includes those who work in the lumber and pulp mills. Taken together, primary industries and manufacturing employ 39% of the Hinton labor force. Not far behind, however, is the so-called service sector that includes trade and food and accommodation services at 20%. The labor force in YH 94 is quite consistent with Hinton employing the majority of workers in primary industries (33%). In contrast, more than 51% of Jasper residents work in the service sector.

The final two figures (3.10 and 3.11) in this section provide information on full-time and part-time employment. In Hinton and Jasper, 67 and 57% (respectively) of the male labor force is employed on a full-time basis. In contrast, 36% of female workers are full time in Hinton and 35% are full time in Jasper.

3.5 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Employment

With the figures on employment and labor force participation from Statistics Canada as a reference point, we will examine community perspectives on jobs and job creation as a means of achieving a more comprehensive understanding of employment in Hinton. This section will complement what we know about employment from Statistics Canada data by exploring issues such as: work opportunities, where the jobs are, and what the future holds. Comments are organized into three sections: jobs for the taking, service-sector expansion, and resource-sector contraction.

3.5.1 *Jobs for the Taking*

The historic development of Hinton's economy is quite unique in that resource-sector diversification and the recent expansion of recreation, tourism, and retail outlets have cushioned the local economy from some of the negative economic activity encountered by other resource-dependent communities. Accompanying this historically strong regional economy was the prospect of well-paid natural resource sector jobs. Figure 3.6 demonstrates the strength of the local labor market, with a consistent and high level of male labor force participation. Labor force participation rates are higher than the national average and, coupled with unemployment rates below the national average, most in-migrants sought employment in the lucrative resource sectors.

> One of the main draws to Hinton in the past was the economy. There was no problem finding jobs and people came from all over Canada and the world to work there. The residents of Hinton have never seen a recession; they hear on the news that there is a recession but it is not evident in this community. ***Medical Professional***

People came from all over the world to work in Hinton. But they didn't just find a temporary job, they found stable and long-term employment. Similarly, many children of those early migrants have also found work in local industries. Unlike some resource-based economies, Hinton industries continue to provide employment year round.

> The mill population is very stable. Turnover is low. People stay there for a long time for the pay cheques. The only real seasonal employees are the summer students and the tree planters. The feller-bunchers are going year round. Spring breakup is a slower time but it's really not that dramatic. People don't get laid off or anything. ***Mill Employee***

The residents of Hinton who are able to gain employment in the resource industries continue to prosper and, in many ways, the legacy of job seekers moving to Hinton to find employment in the resource sector continues today. Spin-offs from this vibrant economic base are numerous and profitable. More recently other economic sectors, independent of the resource sector, are providing employment opportunities for newcomers to Hinton. As in years past, economic expansion fuels the demand for labor and many residents are convinced that job creation continues unabated. For the most part, jobs are for the taking.

> There's no reason to be unemployed in this town. You might not be doing what you want, but there are jobs here. ***Forester***
>
> Generally I don't think that unemployment is a problem in Canada. Lack of willingness to work may be a problem with a number of individuals. Resource extraction industries are big employers, and they pay well. They've got a good benefits package. The government's another big employer, pays well, has a good benefit package. Tourism is a really big potential employer. They use — particularly the service industry — a large number of people. They're people oriented. So there's a big potential to increase employment opportunities locally, with the encouragement of the tourism industries. ***Resource Industry Employee***

Here the sentiment is strong. You may not be doing exactly what you want to be doing, but if a job is what you're after, Hinton remains a good place to find one. Unemployment is low, labor force participation remains high for men (and is rapidly climbing for women), and economic diversification and competitiveness shield the region from national unemployment trends.

Most residents acknowledge the benefits of a strong labor market but for many the availability of jobs is not the important story. The contemporary story that residents are most interested in telling is the gradual shift in employment opportunity

away from the resource sector and toward the service sector. Unemployment and labor force participation rates may appear stable, but the primary nature of employment is changing. In other words, the big story is about who the new employers are. This trend is not so easily observed in Statistics Canada data.

3.5.2 Service-Sector Employment Expansion

Residents most aware of changing employment opportunity are likely those who have lived in Hinton long enough to observe the transition, specifically parents with children reaching an age where post-secondary education, summer jobs, and local career opportunities are pressing matters. Educators also see changing opportunities for youth and readily comment.

> It seems to me, in a nutshell, that we are not able to provide our young people with the opportunities that used to exist. You know Generation X, the lost generation. So this is an impact of having grown too rapidly, economically, and suddenly finding that it's not sustainable. We can't continue to build mills and build industries as we have. ***Educator***

Here is a statement expressing some concern about the speed and extent of economic expansion taking place in Hinton, a pace that is ultimately unsustainable and will necessitate some transition in the economy, with associated consequences for youth employment. Although in previous years, young adults readily landed well-paid summer jobs providing educational expenses or an apprenticeship program, the jobs are now less plentiful. Young people find employment, but end up working two or three jobs with less potential to advance beyond present circumstances.

> I don't think that unemployment is that high but I think a lot of people are working two or three jobs, especially students working two jobs to make ends meet or trying to save money to go to school, they end up having to work two or three jobs. ***Social Services Employee***

For young employees, the job market is changing. Although employment opportunities remain plentiful, the kind of work available today is different than it was a decade ago. With this change, comes an increasing reluctance to live in Hinton as a long-term resident, and the potential loss of a valuable contributor to community life.

In addition to the youth employment experience in Hinton, similar perspectives are articulated about women and Aboriginal people. Figure 3.3 indicates an increase in female labor force participation between 1981 and 1996. The comments below suggest that, as new employees enter the work force, certain groups may remain marginalized or constrained by traditional biases based on race or sex.

> [Opportunities are] very poor when it comes to decent paying jobs. There are a lot of opportunities if you want to become a chamber maid or a dishwasher, that sort of thing. As far as any kind of a decent job, no. We have a lot of our people that have grade 12 and possibly some other training. They don't get the opportunity to ever go in for an interview. ***Aboriginal Employment Officer***
>
> They have women driving trucks out at the [mine]. That sure isn't something I'd want to do. But it is hard for women to get good paying jobs unless you are at the mines or the mill. Otherwise it's just $6 to $7 an hour. ***Social Worker***
>
> I don't think opportunities for women have changed very much. I see a few women going into industry and I remember about 5 years ago the first woman who worked at [the mine] having to go through the [grievance] process and human rights and that kind of thing because she had the qualifications and wasn't hired. ***Female Government Employee***

Although female labor force participation may be rising, some residents suggest that recent female labor force participation rates are specifically related to service-sector expansion in such industries as accommodation, food, and retail services. Specific groups of people like youth, women, and Aboriginals may realize the benefits of job creation in the service sector but, for many, these jobs are a mixed blessing. Jobs are plentiful but residents often lament the difficulties service-sector employees face in achieving a quality of life anywhere close to the median income in Hinton.

3.5.3 Resource-Sector Employment Contraction

By using the word *contraction* as part of the title for this section, we are not suggesting that the resource industry is contracting in terms of productivity or economic output. We use the word here to describe what residents refer to as shrinking employment opportunities or a reduced labor force in the resource sector. Most of the statements in this section come from employees in forestry and mining. Some of the comments are made in general terms and others refer to specific situations of decreasing labor force requirements in resource industries:

> Well we've got a problem in society, because everything that is being designed, manufactured or created is designed to cut manpower. ***Mining Employee***
>
> Well, the way everything is going with automation, like in the mills and different ways of working in the bush that reduce the men required....fewer people are going to be required to do more work. So I see there being unemployment and not many jobs, and more money leaving the area. ***Forester***
>
> Part of the expansion was going to be more responsible environmental operations.... which happened. But the 300 new jobs that were created didn't increase the employment. All it was, was they changed the names of the jobs that were currently in the mill. So yeah, it's a new job, but it's the same employee. They doubled production and they cut back the work force. And yet what you heard in the media, was this huge expansion was taking place and 300 new jobs would be created. Well, they sure as hell were, but there was no employment. Employment actually went down. ***Mill Employee***
>
> Obviously there are going to be a lot fewer jobs to do the same thing that we did in the past. When I moved here in September there was a little article on the most recent town census, and the town hadn't grown since the previous census, which I think was 5 years before. But, in the meantime, they had expanded the pulp mill and built the sawmill. They didn't need any more people. It's all mechanized. The locals aren't going to get hired. But I think we somehow have to address....at least recognize....I think it's another one of these fundamental issues that's got to come on the table before we can deal with the finer scale issues. Like are these things really for the purpose of creating employment? Yes or no? The answer is, I'm sure, no, they're not. And quit trying to tell the people that they are. ***Government Employee***

These comments are strikingly similar in their predictions about future labor force requirements and they are not from traditional critics of resource-based industries. From industry to industry, the message is the same: automation will continue to reduce labor requirements in the mines, in the forest, and on the shop floor. Jobs that are created in this technology-driven economy will require advanced training and a high level of technical skill, and may be filled by people from outside the community. So, both instances—expansion in the service sector and the potential for contraction in the resource sector—have consequences on present and future demands in the labor market. Both the major employers and skill requirements are changing.

This discussion would be incomplete without referring to the relationship between human capital development and a changing job market. In *Chapter 6, Human Capital*, we contend that education levels serve as a proxy indicator for human capital development. We also suggest that sustainable communities are those with a well-educated and flexible workforce, capable of transferring knowledge and ability from one work environment to another. In the context of this discussion, this perspective on human capital becomes more relevant. Employment opportunities and work environments are changing perhaps more rapidly now than in the past. New employers are moving into the local economy and old employers are requiring a different set of skills to succeed in the competitive global market. In this context, investments in human capital will be a major factor in Hinton's ability to cope and adapt to the new economy.

3.6 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Employment

In contrast to Hinton, Jasper does not have the same history of year-round employment. Temporary and part-time employment characterize much of the labor market in Jasper and, as we will see in the discussion to follow, this kind of employment pattern, although often described in negative terms, is actually preferred by some. The employment history in

Jasper is perhaps as much determined by a lifestyle choice as it is by economic conditions. Perspectives on employment in Jasper will be organized into the following sections: seasons of employment, employing the middle class, and a 'matter of lifestyle'.

3.6.1 Seasons of Employment

From the early days of Jasper National Park, temporary employees came to Jasper to work in the tourism industry. One of the first major employers was Jasper Park Lodge (JPL) which recruited a cadre of laborers to build the first lodge structures. After construction, JPL quickly became one of the major players in the expanding tourist industry. The corporate culture of Canadian National Railway (CNR) and JPL provided the historic backdrop and the economic engine driving the development of Jasper townsite. Few residents remain from those early years but those who do can talk at length about the early years of seasonal employment.

> There have always been seasonal workers since I have been here. A lot of university students have come up because there have been places for jobs. JPL brought most of their staff from the East on the promise that if they stayed for the summer that they would pay for the trip back. So we've always had summer staff here and all the stores needed extra help. Each year, there were more and more coming to visit and it took more and more staff to accommodate them. ***Senior Citizen***

Jasper townsite served at least two major functions: to provide a community for those employed by the tourism and transportation sectors (both permanent and temporary) and to cater to Park visitors with necessary food and accommodation. Year after year, people visited this beautiful location and entrepreneurs built a thriving service industry to provide for the growing number of tourists.

During summer months, businesses prosper and require more employees than during the slower winter season. As a result, annual economic cycles in Jasper are consistent and fairly pronounced. Businesses net most of their money and require additional labor during a 4- to 5-month period, then they cut back to minimal staff for the rest of the year. New residents quickly become aware of this cycle, often arriving in Jasper for the first time during a period of high labor demand and then endeavoring to remain in the community as a permanent resident. For those who live in Jasper year round, the "off season" becomes a real struggle.

> It's a beautiful place to raise children but it's hard to get through the winter. Everybody struggles. You need two jobs to get by. ***Local Artist***
>
> ***Question:* Is unemployment a big problem here?**
>
> ***Answer:*** Yes. Some say we should be so proud to have the lowest unemployment in all of Canada at 3.5%. Well that's a load of whatever because I know the amount of people applying for EI [employment insurance] and in the winter it's more like 11 or 12% if not more. It depends very much on if we have snow and if we have lots of it, we get people in. Although that season is starting to grow a little bit because there is a marketing consortium to market the off-season. So that seems to grow a little bit but not in the sense that it's affecting our unemployment rates at all. The winters that we have good ski seasons we're going to see less people on unemployment. The years that we have a bad winter we see a lot of pressure on the Food Bank. ***Social Services Employee***

As mentioned above, local businesses are seeking to extend the tourist season by promoting Jasper as a year-round destination. With some success—the once-slow seasons of Fall and Spring are becoming less so. Although Jasperites often mention their appreciation for the peaceful times of the off-season, most appreciate the effort business leaders are making to expand economic activity and provide employment opportunities over a longer period of the year.

Although employment opportunities may be expanding with some employers who otherwise would hire workers for the summer months only, other areas of employment are less promising. Employers who typically provide residents with what are called "the good jobs" are seen to be providing fewer and fewer of those jobs in recent years.

> It is so obvious how seasonal it is. You come downtown in the winter time and you don't see anybody and you come down here in the summer and you can't find a parking spot. So it is pretty obvious that we are so reliant on the tourism business. And then, the parts that aren't tourism related, it is tougher and tougher to find a stable job in. Like the railway, I think it used to be more secure, and it is not so much anymore and they are not hiring as many. Their numbers are probably down and they are one of the year-round employers. Parks Canada doesn't employ as many people year round either. I think people know you don't have a choice. You can work at the ski hill, but how many jobs are there for the number of people that are getting laid off. I don't think people look at it.... There are some people though who look down on it and say "Oh, you're a lifer" working for Parks for your whole life and only being seasonal. I don't know if they really mean it, or if it is just some way that people joke and deal with it. Not that they really mean that the person is being lazy or something like that, I think they know the circumstances. ***Tourist Industry Employee***

On one level, businesses are making progress in reducing the seasonal nature of economic life and employment in Jasper but, on another level, permanent employment opportunities are less common. Employees may be faced with more opportunity to work in Jasper year round, but those opportunities likely come from a different segment of the economy than they once did. In large measure, residents mention changes among the larger and perhaps more traditional employers of long-term, middle-class Jasper residents. This trend makes employment in Jasper even more seasonal than was historically the case.

3.6.2 *Employing the Middle-class*

When asked what the "good jobs" are in Jasper, the response is most often Parks Canada or CNR. Historically, both employers have provided Jasper residents with permanent employment, a good salary with benefits, and job security. For the most part, people employed in these jobs, along with professionals (teachers and medical professionals) and business owners comprise the middle-class backbone of the community. These are the families and individuals who are long-term residents with commitment, time, and money to invest in community life. More recent perspectives on employment opportunities with Parks Canada, and to a lesser degree CNR, are not as positive as in years past. People see fewer employment opportunities and the ones that do come available are often seasonal contract jobs. Proposals to privatize Park services have also led to much speculation about future change along similar lines.

> I think the major change has been the whole employment issue. Parks' budget has been reduced and that has affected the number of employees here. A lot of positions have been eliminated and I think there is definitely a shortage of resources here. ***Parks Canada Employee***
>
> One of the changes that has been taking place over the last few years has been an increase in tourism which in turn increases the seasonal workers. There have also been cutbacks in the Parks Service as well as the CNR. Both of these factors have led to an increase in the division between the haves and the have-nots in the community. There has also been a decrease in provincial funding to the town which has had an effect on the human services in the town. ***Social Services Employee***

As expressed earlier, increasing tourism has positively affected employment opportunities in the local economy. Both labor force participation rates and employment rates reflect this positive employment atmosphere. Much like the situation in Hinton, what these rates may not reflect is the shift in employment opportunity away from some of these traditional employers and toward new opportunities in the service industry. If this shift is in fact taking place, then the issue of job quality and the associated impact on community life must be addressed. How will the quality of employment in terms of seasonality, remuneration, and skill requirements affect the future of Jasper townsite? If employment trends continue in the same direction, what will the community look like in future generations? These issues must be viewed in light of other trends (*i.e.*, real estate values).

Another area of concern for residents is employment opportunity for young people. Considering the availability of more than 1500 temporary jobs during the summer months, it is difficult to imagine that local youth would have any trouble finding employment. All indications are that jobs are plentiful. Here again, the story is not job opportunities, but skill requirements.

> Well it seems like when the town was smaller, young people from town would get the summer jobs, but now they don't. People from Quebec get the jobs and I hear lots of complaints that the local kids can't speak French and they only hire French people. ***Senior Citizen***
>
> Years ago Parks hired Jasper kids first, then it was Hinton, Edson, and then they went out of there. They always gave Jasper kids a chance. Now Jasper kids very seldom get a job with Parks. All the high school kids and university [kids] used to get jobs. Now they are pushing for bilingual workers. If you have to be bilingual that leaves the Jasper kids out. ***Senior Citizen***

All of these comments point to previously mentioned changes in labor market conditions. Globalization, technical innovation, policy shifts, consumer demand all contribute to a dynamic labor market where the ability to adapt to change must be an important quality of the local work force. The ability to speak French is a prime example. It speaks to the direct relationship between local education levels, adaptability, and the potential to seize new economic opportunities. The Jasper economy continues to create jobs but skill requirements have changed, employers have changed, wages and benefits have changed, and likely the ability to prosper in the traditional sense of stable employment and stable employers has changed as well.

3.6.3 A Matter of Lifestyle

To stop the analysis of employment here would be to miss an important perspective on life in Jasper. Residents of Jasper are attracted to a unique environment and, for many, the good life is not just a matter of employment but perhaps more so a matter of lifestyle. In Section 3.3.6.1 a resident mentioned the high rate of employment insurance applicants during the winter months. Given the very cyclical nature of employment in Jasper, this observation is not surprising. Simply put, there are fewer employment opportunities during winter months. In positive terms, this seasonally slow period leaves residents free to pursue other activities outside of the busy work season and, as these comments can attest, lots of people are more than willing to accommodate major lifestyle changes during the off-season.

> The best part of the reason that I moved back here is from a lifestyle perspective. I've got nine pairs of skis. The business I have here is great. I can work 10 to 12 hours a day through the summer, that's when we earn 75% of our revenue. Through the winter you can put in 20-hour work weeks and take 3 or 4 days here and there taking trips. I'd rather work all summer. If you like the lifestyle you can get hooked here. Most people hold two or three jobs in the summer and work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week but then, in the winter time, they work one job part time and enjoy life. ***Businessperson***
>
> There's a lot of people in this town, and there have been for years and years, who draw unemployment insurance when I'm convinced that they wouldn't have to. I have no idea of the statistics but I know that when I was growing up here there were an awful lot of people who worked for Parks in the summer, made good money, had no intention of working in the winter, so they're unemployed and drawing UIC [employment insurance] because that's just a way of life. I didn't like it then, I don't like it now. ***Community Leader***

Jasper is a community filled with seasonal employment opportunities. The service sector has always required additional labor for part of the season and many of those workers come from outside the community. Those who stay in the community long term are likely to have more permanent employment. Although full employment may be an adequate indicator of economic prosperity and a measure of community health, a proportion of Jasper residents are not daunted by the prospect of seasonal employment. On the contrary, seasonal employment is an attractive aspect of community life and, for some, a part of what makes Jasper an attractive place to live. For others, seasonal employment is a hardship. To what extent is underemployment truly a question of lifestyle versus a structural reality of the local labor market? Employment statistics cannot answer this question. Extensive and detailed face-to-face interviews will be required before this question can be addressed adequately. The detailed face-to-face interviews we conducted suggest this determination must be made on a case-by-case basis.

3.7 Discussion

In section 3.1.3.2, we outline two competing perspectives on the future of work in resource towns. One view, based on economic modernization, suggests a period (or periods) of transition away from the traditional employment base in primary industries and manufacturing, toward a variety of high- and low-technology service industries such as telecommunications and tourism. During times of transition, unemployment may be high but as the economy stabilizes, unemployment will return to a low level. Analysts critical of this perspective suggest that the economically dependent relationship between rural, resource-rich areas of Canada and urban financial centers puts many rural Canadians at a systemic disadvantage in terms of their ability to participate meaningfully in structuring their local economies. Critical observers of economic activity in the Foothills Model Forest might recognize historical and more recent events as evidence of either one (or both) of these perspectives. In Hinton, higher unemployment rates, substantial labor force participation in business, service, food and accommodation, narrative data referring to technology-driven change in forestry and mining, all point to signs of economic transition. In addition, exposure to global commodity prices and the extent of non-resident ownership in some major industries speak to some important issues raised by critics of current social and economic arrangements. Similarly, Jasper has its own set of contemporary realities that, in some ways, are even more driven by theoretical or philosophical underpinnings, such as the role of human populations in the park ecosystem, pro-business versus pro-conservation perspectives, and labor conditions in traditionally low-skilled, low-paying service industries. The nature and structure of the tourism economy that evolves in the region will have implications for community well-being as well. If the tourism industry is dominated by outside investors and external capital, profits will accrue elsewhere and local residents will only benefit through wages and limited spin-offs. If the tourism industry develops with local capital and through local entrepreneurship, the potential for reinvestment of profits locally will be greater and the benefits to the local economy will likely be greater.

This report provides some baseline data for historical and regional comparison that will inform the debate on these issues. By bringing together these data on employment with other information such as exposure to global markets, decision making, and control, it may be possible to speak in more concrete terms about the long-term sustainability of these communities as elements of the local ecosystem and the global marketplace Although Hinton and Jasper clearly have stable, prosperous economies, community and regional leaders must pay attention to equity issues within the local labor market. There remain significant disparities in employment opportunities and access across lines of sex, across racial lines, and across geographical lines (YH 94 relative to Hinton and Jasper). A thorough analysis of community sustainability requires attention to distributional issues and internal equity. Looking beyond aggregate measures will be a key theme in the following chapter on income.

3.8 Appendix

3.8.1 *Hinton: Additional Local Perspectives on Employment*

> New technology. Like I've heard some stuff in the coal mine—if you look at employment, there's much bigger equipment available now, so even if Cheviot does go ahead, I've heard some rumblings that over the next 10 years they're looking at probably trimming their workforce by half through the use of much bigger equipment and, in some cases, radio-controlled equipment, so their trucks will be computerized and there won't even be a driver in them. So even though the mine may exist, some of the jobs that were there today may not be there with these new advances in technology and whatever to try to keep costs lower and keep them competitive in the global market. ***Resource Industry Employee***

> Yeah, we're lucky here in Hinton with regard to employment. A place like Edmonton....like that's why I moved here you know. There's a lot of unemployment in Edmonton. ***Social Worker***

> If you want to work, there is work. People say "there is no work. I can't find a job." Well to me, they're not looking hard enough. ***Businessperson***

> I see a lot of employment opportunities out there. I see a lot of people that are also not willing to go after the opportunities. Our unemployment levels in town here, I believe are probably the lowest in Alberta. In our area, we obviously don't have an employment problem, but in Alberta, I don't believe we have a real problem. I believe that the jobs are out there. I believe most people actually have to get out there and find them. ***Businessperson***

I don't know if the unemployment problem is such a problem in Hinton, but we're in kind of a unique situation in that there's probably very few unemployed, but there's some real distinctions between groups that typically....I've heard this several times, that they have the highest earnings per capita for Alberta. ***Mill Employee***

I think that unemployment is extremely low here mainly because people who are unemployed and have exhausted their possibilities, they move on....so we are more isolated from national trends....underemployment, tourism, industry, a slow growth industry and is characterized by low wages so the jobs that it creates are not very good jobs so I think that there will be a steady demand for bus boys and waitresses, part time close to minimum wage....so the financial health of Hinton is based clearly on the forest resource....and I work in the tourist industry and I know how little I get paid. ***Tourism Employee***

Hopefully tourism will grow and if we run out of coal we will still have jobs in Hinton and be self-sufficient that way. ***Businessperson***

Like any community, there is a subpopulation of people who find it difficult to get a job. They may not be smart enough, they may not have the attitude but, in Hinton for those kind of people, it is not that tough. In Hinton, it is a little bit easier for those people. There is a person that I know that has had three different jobs this summer. She got fired from two of them and then quit the other one. There are not a lot of communities where you can go and get three different jobs and there is still "help wanted" signs. ***Educator***

I think unemployment is a bullshit thing. I've never collected in my life. When I didn't want to work, it was because I didn't feel like working. It was my own decision. There's always jobs. Whether it's the job you want or not, it's different, but I mean there's always work doing something. ***Outfitter***

We're one of the most fortunate areas anywhere....I feel that we have very few unemployed and the feeling obviously there is seasonal work and young people who can't move immediately into a job because of their lack of experience or they didn't graduate or you know things like that so you never like to see anyone unemployed....granted it exists but it's very minimal. ***Outfitter***

I don't see unemployment as a problem in Alberta....or underemployment....to be honest. I think that there are enough opportunities that people....as long as we give....have a good fundamental education system, people will have opportunities that they can avail themselves of. That's how I see the Alberta situation. ***Town Administrator***

I think it's a problem because of the way we deal with it. I'll give you an example. I used to run a restaurant. I used to have a restaurant in_____(small town). I needed 20 employees. I had five. I was 15 short....all summer. I could've probably hired ten full-time, no problem. I couldn't hire anybody. I used to talk to the UIC office in _____(regional center) on just about a daily basis, looking for people. _____ is 50 miles away from _____. I offered housing, a pretty fair wage....I mean you could support a family on what I was willing to pay. There were registered—at the UIC office—in excess of 2,000 unemployed restaurant workers collecting pogey. And here I am, an hour away, and I can't get goddamn help. Now you explain that one to me. That's just incredible. ***Resource Industry Employee***

I see a huge potential for more jobs, but what's going to happen is they're going to go down. There's going to be less jobs in this region, because of modernization and automation. For example, this mill they just built, it's the lowest cost producer sawmill in the world....period, bar none. So what we've got here is an example of....they're taking seven times the amount of logs out of the forest right now than they did 4 years ago. They're doing it with half the men it takes to do it anywhere else in the world. So what that shows me is, there are going to be less jobs. There's no way there won't be. ***Pulp Mill Employee***

Well I think that unemployment is putting a bit of strain on the families, because what happens in the native community—well, first of all, these guys are not eligible for UI. With the cutbacks in social assistance, a lot of them aren't even eligible for that. So what happens, is that a lot of it falls back on the

family, like you get a lot of older males or females that should be out on their own, are still at home with their families. ***Aboriginal Leader***

Well the official rate is like 8, 9, 10%, but that's just the people who are on UIC rolls and stuff like that. I think all the people that have quit looking for work, they don't count, eh?.... So the figure's probably closer to 15 to 20%. And then when you look at all the people who are taking part-time jobs, who'd rather have full-time jobs. And also stuff like people flipping burgers, who have no chance really to raise a family or contribute meaningfully to society and that sort of stuff. So it's a big problem. ***Wilderness User***

I know there are a lot of women out there with a lot of barriers, who don't have the education, who've been abused from the time they were young and are still being abused now. There're lots of jobs, like I said, if you want to clean rooms. ***Government Employee***

But what do they base unemployment on? On those that are drawing UIC right? And if we go on those stats, it would be low, but if a person would look at the community and go to a place of business and say, how many applicants do you have? For a job posting? Sometimes it's upwards of 200. And there's people, although not as many men, but certainly more women, that have university degrees or college or trained as a secretary or whatever, that are either not working or waitressing, because there're no jobs in their field. And then with the younger kids that are getting out of school, the 18-, 19-, 21-year-olds, there's quite a few of those where they're unemployed, or just doing casual work. ***Town Employee***

I don't know how we're going to survive if we don't create more labor-intensive employment in industry. Sure automation is nice, but I think somehow we have to balance it out. ***Transportation Industry Employee***

Well it's a sad thing with the unemployment the way it is, but when you're looking at computerization and the modern technology and so on....also the cutbacks, actually, you're not creating jobs, you're destroying 'em in a way. ***Recreation Industry Employee***

Well, most, in terms of management jobs obviously in our company, and we require some specific scales of education otherwise so you're really talking about entry level and that's pretty opportunist down here. And, as a matter of fact, if you come and set up residence in Hinton without a job and you have some skills and you're persistent enough, it won't take very long to find a job in one of these three operations (natural resource-based industries). ***Mill Employee***

3.8.2 Jasper: Additional Local Perspectives on Employment

See, to a certain extent, you always had that. A lot of students in the summer were then laid off and then they collected unemployment insurance and they didn't work. We used to call them ski bums. I couldn't afford to go to the ski hill but they could. ***Senior Citizen***

The good jobs for locals are the Parks positions. They pay well but they're only for 4 to 5 months of the year. So you end up seeing these people on UI [employment insurance] for the winter. ***Social Services Employee***

Parks are more interested in hiring part-time people because they don't have to pay all the benefits that they should be paying them. Remember too, Jasper used to do a lot on grants. Well they've gone now so it hasn't been easy to do things now. We never really got an awful lot of help in Jasper anyway because the Federal grants are not available to us because we live in a park in Alberta and the provincial government does not give us grants because we're in a National Park. We fall between the cracks. ***Senior Citizen***

Ideally, for the short term, I would love to [live in Jasper]. The long term, I don't know how feasible it is really. The number of employment opportunities are fairly limited. I guess I'm more of a post-materialist kind of man and things like friends and life-style probably are equally if not more important. ***Parks Canada Employee***

Unemployment is really high here. Go over to the employment office. It's always really busy. What you see a lot of, especially at this time of year, is people having two or three jobs to make it here. You do it just to save money otherwise you don't really save anything. ***Social Services Employee***

What I see is people who come here, a lot of times from Eastern Canada, with a romantic vision of Western Canada and 'I'm going to spend a holiday hiking in the mountains' and come here and work jobs like washing dishes and do all the dirty work. If they do get to go hiking in the mountains enough to make it worth staying, then they'll do almost anything to try to get in the community and stay. They do and they've made tremendous successes of themselves here, eventually winding up with good, secure employment and often in jobs that are worthwhile to them and the Park. I'll bet you this idea of the Peter Pan Syndrome.... There may be a lot less of that just in the process of aging. We change our goals and directions. The idea of partying every morning until 3 a.m. gets really old, really fast. There are a few Peter Pan types around, mostly unreformed hippies from the '60s. They'll never grow up. That's fine. They can live here too. (Laughing.) Who wants to grow up and move back to the city and sell shoes for God's sake. Let's all be Peter Pan to some extent. (Laughing.) ***Environmentalist***

My impression is the same in all levels of Parks. Morale is at an all-time low, particularly when about a year ago employees were told their jobs would likely be privatized and that they would have first crack at contracts for what they're doing now but they had to prepare submissions and bids and so on. That just increased the stress levels of employees who were already getting laid off. There's no job security. That was bad enough but then, later on, when some of them actually did go through this process of preparing bids for what they call the employee takeovers, the Parks service turned around and said we don't think we're going to do that after all which was just doubly infuriating. I really feel sorry for those folks. ***Environmentalist***

I think that we can entice people here in the winter and the off season and we can help make the seasonal employment more stable year round, and for people who live here. It's not going to be that much of a stretch. I think we can manage the business and maintain the Park as it is. I think there's a reasonable line there that we can bring more people in during the off season and it's not going to ruin the Park *per se*. ***Hotel Employer***

I think that housing also drives the turnover in our line employees. We have and can provide year-round employment for those that want it, however, it's not a living environment where people feel like this is their home, that it's a steady, long-term place to live. ***Hotel Employer***

I always have this argument with my fiancé too. He always says hire a local first and I always say how many locals applied. That is the question. Lots of times nobody applies and what are you going to do, you are going to hire the transient. That is the bottom line and people don't know who is qualified and don't know who applied but "they could have hired a local." ***Tourist Industry Employee***

3.8.3 Census Tables

Table 3.1 Labor force activity by sex, 1996

Census Divisions	15 yrs and over		In labor force		employed		unemployed	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	3,790	3,535	3,245	2,285	3,040	2,165	205	115
YH 94	3,795	3,265	3,025	2,075	2,785	1,940	240	135
Jasper	1,860	2,360	1,625	1,705	1,555	1,555	70	155
Foothills	9,445	9,160	7,895	6,065	7,380	5,660	515	405
Edson	2,720	2,670	2,055	1,535	2,055	1,535	145	210
Grande Cache	1,660	1,490	1,360	830	1,360	830	70	75
Whitecourt	2,970	2,575	2,410	1,715	2,405	1,715	165	170
Edmonton	235,180	247,920	177,600	156,950	161,110	143,260	16,490	13,685
Alberta	1,021,435	1,033,585	810,015	676,965	750,840	628,865	59,170	48,100
Canada	11,022,455	11,606,470	8,007,955	6,804,745	7,191,125	6,127,615	816,830	677,130

Table 3.2 Unemployment and participation rate, by sex, 1981 - 1996

Census Divisions	1996				1991			
	Unemployment rate		Participation rate		Unemployment rate		Participation rate	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Hinton	6.3	5.0	85.6	64.6	7.3	8.1	89.1	65.7
YH 94	4.1	6.5	79.7	63.6	8.6	6.0	82.4	62.8
Jasper	4.3	9.1	87.4	72.2	2.2	4.0	89.1	79.6
Foothills	5	6.7	83.7	66.4	7	6.5	86.4	67.0
Edson	6.6	12.0	80.7	65.4	8.0	13.2	86.9	64.0
Grande Cache	4.6	8.3	85.6	61.1	9.5	10.8	89.4	66.8
Whitecourt	6.4	9.0	86.5	73.2	7.8	10.2	91.3	71.4
Edmonton	9.3	8.7	75.5	63.3	9.5	8.9	79.7	65.2
Alberta	7.3	7.1	79.3	65.5	7.5	8.2	81.8	66.2
Canada	10.2	10.0	72.7	58.6	10.1	10.2	76.4	59.9

Table 3.2 cont'd Unemployment and participation rate, by sex, 1981-1996

Census Divisions	1996				1991			
	Unemployment rate		Participation rate		Unemployment rate		Participation rate	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Hinton	11.2	7.9	88.8	60.0	4.2	5.3	89.9	57.6
YH 94	10.2	10.6	79.9	49.3	5.2	5.9	80.8	41.9
Jasper	9.3	7.9	91.2	77.3	3.9	4.1	92.1	73.4
Foothills	9	9.0	85.5	58.7	4.6	5.4	88.4	54.9
Edson	10.6	12.7	84.8	59.7	4.4	5.7	88.3	57.5
Grande Cache	11.7	8.2	86.7	66.4	2.9	9.9	92.2	54.5
Whitecourt	15.8	14.4	92.1	66.7	6.5	4.1	92.4	61.6
Edmonton	12.1	9.7	81.4	64.6	3.9	4.3	85.0	63.1
Alberta	9.8	9.6	82.7	62.5	3.3	4.3	84.7	58.2
Canada	9.6	11.2	77.5	55.9	6.5	8.7	78.2	51.8

Table 3.3a Census subdivisions by standard occupation, and sex, 1996

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Edson		Grande Cache		YH 94		Jasper		Whitecourt	
	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.
All occupations	3,205	2,260	2,180	1,695	1,420	885	3,025	2,040	1,625	1,385	2,550	1,850
Management	215	130	210	100	100	70	215	135	230	175	250	90
Business, finance, & admin.	145	570	125	435	55	200	115	610	95	230	115	585
Natural & applied sciences	190	25	125	10	65	15	130	10	35	10	165	35
Health	15	110	25	105	20	85	10	85	30	60	10	70
Social science, & education	95	140	40	125	60	105	25	100	35	80	40	165
Art, Culture, Recreation	20	50	25	20	10	20	20	30	35	20	20	20
Sales, & service	410	1,040	275	805	190	330	215	635	625	755	370	725
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	1,385	90	750	40	570	40	1150	95	480	20	680	65
Primary industry	290	15	245	20	240	10	835	310	55	30	310	10
Processing, machinery	445	85	360	35	115	10	370	15	0	0	580	85

Table 3.3b Census subdivisions by standard occupation, and sex, 1991

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Edson		Grande Cache		YH 94		Jasper		Whitecourt	
	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.
All occupations	3,060	2,020	2,315	1,640	1,245	820	2,780	1,835	1,350	1,115	2,360	1,575
Mgmt. & admin. fields	245	125	180	110	95	35	220	125	85	115	195	125
Natural sciences, engineering & math	175	15	150	10	25	0	45	10	10	0	165	155
Social sciences & related fields	20	65	10	30	15	10	20	10	0	10	15	50
Religion	10	0	10	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	0
Teaching & related fields	50	115	40	130	20	45	15	85	15	40	10	60
Medicine & health	10	85	25	125	20	50	0	110	0	35	15	80
Artistic, literacy, recreational & related fields	15	10	20	15	10	15	10	10	25	20	0	0
Clerical & related fields	95	710	65	515	35	280	40	530	65	320	110	480
Sales	220	185	115	185	50	80	135	170	90	165	130	140
Services	180	495	215	450	110	255	90	365	420	330	130	490
Farming, horticulture, & animal husbandry	20	25	20	15	15	0	485	260	30	15	0	10
Fishing, trapping, & related fields	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forestry & logging	115	10	120	0	60	0	120	10	10	0	145	0
Mining & quarrying (includes oil & gas)	165	10	140	15	130	0	155	10	15	0	260	0
Processing	250	10	115	0	110	0	90	25	10	10	260	60
Machining & related fields	115	25	80	0	40	0	120	0	10	10	75	0
Product fabrication, assembly & repair	290	0	265	10	110	10	225	15	50	0	190	0
Construction trades	570	10	300	10	155	0	570	45	150	15	235	10
Transport equip. operator	200	55	180	10	75	10	190	30	305	25	185	0
Material handling & related fields	120	25	50	0	45	0	35	15	0	0	65	10
Other crafts, equip. operating	85	20	140	15	80	0	85	0	15	0	55	20
Occup. not classified here	115	10	65	0	40	10	100	0	35	0	95	15

Table 3.3c Census subdivisions by standard occupation, and sex, 1996

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Jasper		YH 94		Foothills	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
All occupations	3,205	2,260	1,625	1,385	3,025	2,040	7,855	5,685
Management	215	130	230	175	215	135	660	440
Business, finance and admin.	145	570	95	230	115	610	355	1,410
Natural and applied sciences	190	25	35	10	130	10	355	45
Health	15	110	30	60	10	85	55	255
Social science and education	95	140	35	80	25	100	155	320
Art, Culture, Recreation	20	50	35	20	20	30	75	100
Sales and service	410	1,040	625	755	215	635	1,250	2,430
Trades, transp., & equip. operators	1,385	90	480	20	1,150	95	3,015	205
Primary industry	290	15	55	30	835	310	1,180	355
Processing, machinery	445	85	0	0	370	15	815	100

Table 3.3d Census subdivisions by standard occupation, and sex, 1991

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Jasper		YH 94		Foothills	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
All occupations	3,060	2,020	1,350	1,115	2,780	1,835	7,190	4,970
Managerial & administrative fields	245	125	85	115	220	125	550	365
Natural sciences, engineering & math	175	15	10	0	45	10	230	25
Social sciences & related fields	20	65	0	10	20	10	40	85
Religion	10	0	0	0	10	0	20	0
Teaching & related fields	50	115	15	40	15	85	80	240
Medicine and health	10	85	0	35	0	110	10	230
Artistic, literacy, recreation & related fields	15	10	25	20	10	10	50	40
Clerical & related fields	95	710	65	320	40	530	200	1,560
Sales	220	185	90	165	135	170	445	520
Services	180	495	420	330	90	365	690	1,190
Farming, horticulture, & animal husbandry	20	25	30	15	485	260	535	300
Fishing, trapping & related fields	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forestry & logging	115	10	10	0	120	10	245	20
Mining, & quarrying (includes oil & gas)	165	10	15	0	155	10	335	20
Processing	250	10	10	10	90	25	350	45
Machining & related fields	115	25	10	10	120	0	245	35
Product fabrication, assembly & repair	290	0	50	0	225	15	565	15
Construction trades	570	10	150	15	570	45	1,290	70
Transport equipment operator	200	55	305	25	190	30	695	110
Material handling & related fields	120	25	0	0	35	15	155	40
Other crafts, equipment operating	85	20	15	0	85	0	185	20
Occupations not classified here	115	10	35	0	100	0	250	10

Table 3.3e Aggregation of 1991 3a

Std. Occupations	Hinton		Jasper		Foothills	
	males	females	males	females	males	females
All Occupations	3,060	2,020	1,350	1,115	7,190	4,970
Resource Industry	1,020	75	110	20	1,740	135
Transportation	320	80	305	25	1,035	170
Construction	570	10	150	15	1,290	70
Other	1,150	1,855	785	1,055	3,125	4,595

Table 3.4a Census subdivisions by percentage of employed in standard occupation, by sex, 1996

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Edson		Grande Cache		YH 94		Jasper		Whitecourt	
	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.
All occupations	3,205	2,260	2,180	1,695	1,420	885	3,025	2,040	1,625	1,385	2,550	1,850
Management	6.7	5.8	9.6	5.9	7.0	7.9	7.1	6.6	14.2	12.6	9.8	4.9
Business, finance, & administrative	4.5	25.2	5.7	25.7	3.9	22.6	3.8	29.9	5.8	16.6	4.5	31.6
Natural & applied sciences	5.9	1.1	5.7	0.6	4.6	1.7	4.3	0.5	2.2	0.7	6.5	1.9
Health	0.5	4.9	1.1	6.2	1.4	9.6	0.3	4.2	1.8	4.3	0.4	3.8
Social science & education	3.0	6.2	1.8	7.4	4.2	11.9	0.8	4.9	2.2	5.8	1.6	8.9
Art, Culture, & Recreation	0.6	2.2	1.1	1.2	0.7	2.3	0.7	1.5	2.2	1.4	0.8	1.1
Sales & service	12.8	46.0	12.6	47.5	13.4	37.3	7.1	31.1	38.5	54.5	14.5	39.2
Trades, transport, & equip. operator	43.2	3.9	34.4	2.4	40.1	4.5	38.0	4.7	29.5	1.4	26.7	3.5
Primary industry	9.0	0.7	11.2	1.2	16.9	1.1	27.6	15.2	3.4	2.2	12.2	0.5
Processing, machinery	13.9	3.8	16.5	2.1	8.1	1.1	12.2	0.7	0	0	22.7	4.6

Table 3.4b Census subdivisions by percentage of employed in standard occupations, by sex, 1991

Standard Occupations	Hinton		Edson		Grande Cache		YH 84		Jasper		Whitecourt	
	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.	males	fem.
All occupations	3,060	2,020	2,315	1,640	1,245	820	2,780	1,835	1,350	1,115	2,360	1,575
Managerial & admin. fields	8.0	6.2	7.8	6.7	7.6	4.3	7.9	6.8	6.3	10.3	8.3	7.9
Natural sciences, engineering & math	5.7	0.7	6.5	0.6	2.0	0.0	1.6	0.5	0.7	0.0	7.0	1.0
Social sciences & related fields	0.7	3.2	0.4	1.8	1.2	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.0	0.9	0.6	3.2
Religion	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Teaching &related fields	1.6	5.7	1.7	7.9	1.6	5.5	0.5	4.6	1.1	3.6	0.4	3.8
Medicine & health	0.3	4.2	1.1	7.6	1.6	6.1	0.0	6.0	0.0	3.1	0.6	5.1
Artistic, literacy, recreation & related fields	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.8	0.4	0.5	1.9	1.8	0.0	0.0
Clerical & related fields	3.1	35.1	2.8	31.4	2.8	34.1	1.4	28.9	4.8	28.7	4.7	30.5
Sales	7.2	9.2	5.0	11.3	4.0	9.8	4.9	9.3	6.7	14.8	5.5	8.9
Services	5.9	24.5	9.3	27.4	8.8	31.1	3.2	19.9	31.1	29.6	5.5	31.1
Farming, horticulture, & animal husbandry	0.7	1.2	0.9	0.9	1.2	0.0	17.4	14.2	2.2	1.3	0.0	0.6
Fishing, trapping, & related fields	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Forestry & logging	3.8	0.5	5.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	4.3	0.5	0.7	0.0	6.1	0.0
Mining & quarrying (includes oil & gas)	5.4	0.5	6.0	0.9	10.4	0.0	5.6	0.5	1.1	0.0	11.0	0.0
Processing	8.2	0.5	5.0	0.0	8.8	0.0	3.2	1.4	0.7	0.9	11.0	3.8
Machining & related fields	3.8	1.2	3.5	0.0	3.2	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.7	0.9	3.2	0.0
Product fabrication, assembly & repair	9.5	0.0	11.4	0.6	8.8	1.2	8.1	0.8	3.7	0.0	8.1	0.0
Construction trades	18.6	0.5	13.0	0.6	12.4	0.0	20.5	2.5	11.1	1.3	10.0	0.6
Transport equip. operator	6.5	2.7	7.8	0.6	6.0	1.2	6.8	1.6	22.6	2.2	7.8	0.0
Material handling & related fields	3.9	1.2	2.2	0.0	3.6	0.0	1.3	0.8	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.6
Other crafts, equip. operating	2.8	1.0	6.0	0.9	6.4	0.0	3.1	0.0	1.1	0.0	2.3	1.3
Occup. not classified here	3.8	0.5	2.8	0.0	3.2	1.2	3.6	0.0	2.6	0.0	4.0	1.0

Table 3.5a Full-time and part-time employment and income, 1996

Census Divisions	Number of full time employed		Average full-time employment income		Number of part time employed		Average part-time employment income	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	2,200	880	50,557	25,214	1,060	1,570	24,282	9,756
YH 94	1,540	765	39,936	23,181	1,460	1,310	23,317	9,694
Jasper	950	515	40,103	28,519	715	950	19,893	12,021
Foothills	4,690	2,160	44,951	25,298	3,235	3,830	22,877	10,297
Edson	1,365	660	45,125	22,272	890	1,020	21,199	9,336
Grande Cache	940	355	53,613	28,689	490	640	24,327	9,988
Whitecourt	1,545	785	52,021	24,752	1,090	1,195	26,032	11,070
Edmonton	97,760	69,995	41,043	28,795	77,535	85,690	17,567	12,107
Alberta	468,950	293,110	42,725	28,091	332,770	380,840	19,055	11,942
Canada	4,514,850	2,998,940	42,488	30,130	3,329,880	3,712,545	18,672	12727

Table 3.5b Full-time and part-time employment and income, 1991

Census Divisions	Number of full time employed		Average full-time employment income		Number of part time employed		Average part-time employment income	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	1,905	840	45,964	22,603	1,165	1,320	23,599	10,981
YH 94	1,640	630	30,908	18,971	1,145	1,110	20,851	10,613
Jasper	740	525	35,911	21,068	625	625	20,100	10,622
Foothills	4,285	1,995	38,458	21,048	2,935	3,055	21,780	10,775
Edson	1,420	720	40,849	22,045	920	1,065	19,554	8,821
Grande Cache	875	325	48,032	24,800	405	525	22,187	11,165
Whitecourt	1,535	565	42,271	23,209	850	1,125	23,434	8,718
Edmonton	108,220	74,485	37,662	25,868	78,590	88,815	17,284	11,381
Alberta	471,950	288,395	38,389	25,037	307,835	358,360	17,720	11,045
Canada	4,699,890	3,018,885	38,648	26,033	3,207,005	3,545,250	17,952	11,244

Table 3.6 Full-time and part-time employment and income, 1986

Census Divisions	Number of full time employed		Average full-time employment income		Number of part time employed		Average part-time employment income	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	1,725	660	45,626	25,427	1,150	1,200	26,504	9,453
YH 94	1,270	370	34,035	21,884	1,195	970	21,642	8,027
Jasper	795	280	36,131	24,837	745	920	15,143	10,550
Foothills	3,795	1,310	39,713	25,490	3,090	3,090	21,863	9,314
Edson	1,165	540	44,547	24,304	1,045	1,060	22,166	9,100
Grande Cache	545	195	44,876	27,172	560	545	26,900	9,493
Whitecourt	990	415	41,915	22,523	870	875	20,242	9,126
Edmonton	97,170	65,230	40,695	27,011	80,580	85,290	16,769	10,837
Alberta	416,505	226,810	40,699	26,430	310,705	336,730	17,792	10,590
Canada	4,249,365	2,331,515	38,435	25,194	3,033,575	3,240,035	16,979	10,095

Income adjusted by inflation factor = 1.26

Table 3.7 Average employment and income, 1981

Census Divisions	Number of full time and part time employed		Average full-time and part-time employment income	
	males	females	males	females
Hinton	2,785	1,780	34,551	13,170
Edson	1,980	1,260	32,503	12,595
YH 94	2,835	1,460	29,649	12,089
Jasper	1,390	1,035	28,285	13,998
Foothills	7,010	4,275	31,296	12,987
Grande Cache	1,495	865	23,288	13,794
Whitecourt	1,950	1,365	31,206	11,842
Edmonton	181,985	140,385	31,328	16,376
Alberta	730,470	510,235	31,565	15,225
Canada	7,207,610	5,065,640	28,370	14801

Table 3.8 Employment according to industrial classification (SICs), 1991

Industry	Hinton labor force	Jasper labor force	YH 94 labor force
Primary industries	1,155	25	1,540
Manufacturing	815	10	330
Construction	350	105	540
Transportation, communication and other utilities	235	425	400
Wholesale and retail trade	670	305	490
Finance, insurance, and real estate	165	140	80
Business, accommodation, food and beverage, and other services	935	1,005	600
Government, health, education, and social services	745	435	640
All industries	5,085	2,460	4620

Chapter 4.
INCOME DISTRIBUTION

4.1 Objective

To evaluate the average and the range of incomes in the Foothills Model Forest by examining average incomes and income distributions reported by Statistics Canada and by reporting statements from community residents regarding the distribution of income in their community. These statements will enhance statistical information by describing the community-level impact of income gaps and concentrations. The role of part-time versus full-time work and household composition are also considered in the analysis.

4.2 Rationale

In a recent review of projects involving indicators of community sustainability, Beckley and Burkosky (1999) found that social equality is a common indicator of community well-being. The distribution of material resources within a given community is one way of measuring equality. Therefore, an assessment of income distribution allows us to examine concentrations and deficiencies in wealth according to specific characteristics such as sex and race. If employment income is seen to be evenly distributed, then it is likely that a large proportion of the community is benefiting from the local economy. On the other hand, if employment income is concentrated among a small proportion of residents, then questions may arise regarding equity and long-term community well-being.

4.3 Income Distribution in Resource Towns

A *distribution* refers to the variation of an indicator such as population, age or, in this case, employment income. This distribution of values can produce insights into the character of a community by illustrating characteristics that single-value averages often mask. For instance, a community may report an average family income of $45,000, but this figure only tells part of the story. What are the differences in income between subpopulations such as sex or race? Compared with provincial and national averages, how large is the income gap between rich and poor families? What role do double-income families play in income distribution at the community level. These are some of the questions addressed in this section.

The literature on income distribution in resource-dependent communities is scant. Some studies in the forest-dependence literature do note the dramatic differences in employment earnings depending upon the type of forest dependence. Bailey *et al.* (1996) demonstrate in Alabama, that communities hosting pulp and paper mills earn much higher incomes than other types of forest-dependent communities and other rural communities in general. Overdevest and Green (1995) also compare income characteristics of various types of forest-processing facilities with communities that depend upon timber extraction or forest land ownership. Once again, they note high average incomes in pulp and paper mill communities, relative to other rural communities. Unfortunately, these studies do not report income distributions, except in a broad, general sense. As well, there are few studies that document income distributions in tourism-dependent communities.

The literature that does deal with income distribution in forest-dependent communities usually highlights one key feature—labor markets are highly segmented. A segmented labor market is one characterized by a dual local economy, a portion of which is characterized by high wages, job stability, and fringe benefits, the other portion of which is characterized by low wages, temporary work, with few or no benefits (Bailey *et al.* 1996).

Authors in places as far flung as British Columbia and Alabama have noted the segmented nature of labor markets, particularly in forest-products processing communities. Marchak (1983) describes conditions in British Columbia 20 years ago. Between 63 and 87% of men were employed in the forest-products sector in her sampled communities. Only 3 to 7% of women were employed in the forest sector. Overall, men who were employed full time earned more than twice than

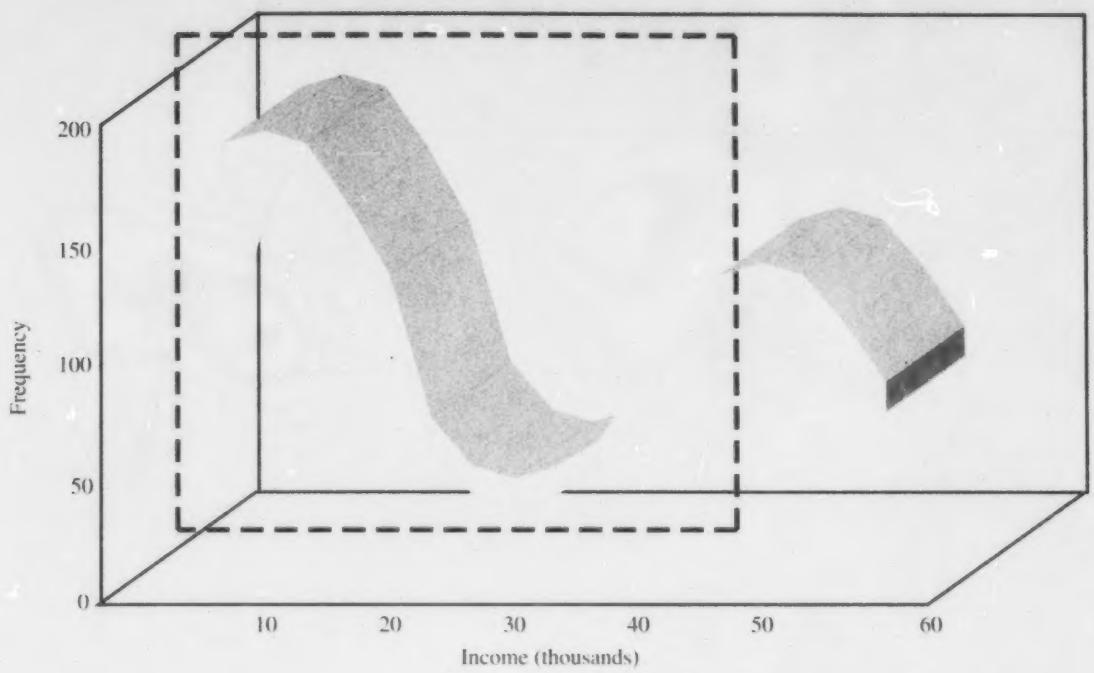

Figure 4.1 Shape of a bimodal distribution.

full-time employed women (gross means of $21,619 compared to $10,728 for men and women, respectively)(Marchak 1983, pp.122).

Bailey *et al.* (1996) report similar findings in Alabama. Although they don't report income data, either in averages or distributions, they do document the fact that white males totally dominate employment in the high-wage primary labor market centered around forest-products processing. African Americans and women together comprise the majority of the population in the rural Alabama counties in their sample and yet these groups are virtually absent in the ranks of the pulp and paper mill employees.

4.4 Income Gap

The expression, "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer," is a bit of a cliché, but statistics continue to bear out this assertion. Globally, the income gap is quite dramatic and, as many observers have pointed out, Canada is not immune. Over the last two decades, the gap between rich and poor Canadians has caught the attention of numerous economists and social critics and recent census data reported in *The Globe and Mail* (December 23, 1997) indicates that the gap between Canada's haves and have-nots continues to widen. For the bottom fifth of families in Canada, average income fell to $17,334 from $17,882[7] in 1996. In contrast, the richest fifth of families saw their incomes rise on average to $114,874 from $112,822 the year before. Although the gap is not as severe in some parts of the country, it is of considerable concern to many Canadians. If current trends continue, future census data will show increasing polarization — more people in low- and high-income categories, and fewer people in middle-income categories. Differences in education and ability will always stratify incomes, but arguably a high degree of income disparity between the rich and the poor is counterproductive to community development and is out of line with Canada's image of itself as an egalitarian society full of economic opportunity for those who are willing to work hard. The challenge then is to determine the extent to which the benefits of economic prosperity are distributed within a community and how the gaps and concentrations of income affect residents' well-being.

[7] Values are reported in constant 1997 dollars (i.e., adjusted to account for inflation).

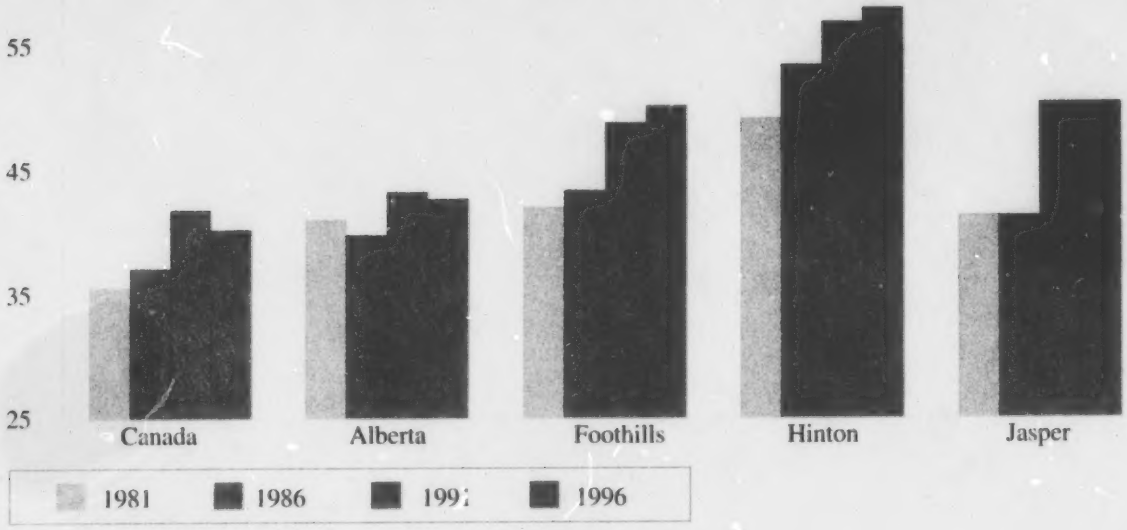

Figure 4.2 Median household income, 1981–1996 (income adjusted to 1996 real dollars).

In statistical terms, the income distribution in Canada is *bimodal*. It is characterized by two high points with a trough in the middle. One point represents a substantial proportion of people with low incomes and the second point represents another substantial proportion of people with high incomes. The trough in the middle graphically illustrates the middle-income gap. Figure 4.1 exhibits a characteristic bimodal distribution with data presented to exaggerate the bimodal shape. Overlying the figure is a dotted *view frame*. Inside this frame is the portion of the bimodal distribution visible in Figures 4.4 through 4.7.

This detail is important to mention here because the distributions depicted in the graphs to follow are distorted by the aggregated groupings at the high end of the scale. Statistics Canada data on income are usually reported in non-comparable income categories. For example, the under $10,000 income category is our aggregation of five Statistics Canada groupings ($0–$999; $1,000–$2,999; $3,000–$4,999; $5,000–$6,999; $7,000–$9,999). From $10,000 to $30,000 Statistics Canada reports income in $5,000 increments, and above $60,000, all income earners are aggregated together. We have streamlined the categories into $10,000 increments, but we do not have disaggregated data that allow us to show additional $10,000 increments above $60,000 for male and female incomes. For the most detailed and accurate view of income ideally we would use income data in $2,000 or $5,000 increments that range from $0 up to $150,000. If Statistics Canada did not aggregate values in the *Over 60K* category, the actual income distribution in Canada would resemble something like the one depicted in Figure 4.1 where the distribution line would dip downwards at both ends of the graph.

4.5 Income Distribution at a Glance

The data in Figure 4.2[8] show a general increase in median incomes between 1981 and 1996 for households in the Foothills Model Forest area. Hinton reports the highest median[9] household income at more than $58,000 for 1996, but even the median household income for the entire Foothills region is higher than the national or provincial average. Once more, Figure 4.2 shows a steadily increasing median household income for the Foothills Model Forest area.

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[8] Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada, Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B. Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1996, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada.

[9] There are three measures of central tendency: mean, median, and mode. Mean (or average) is the most widely used measure but is strongly affected

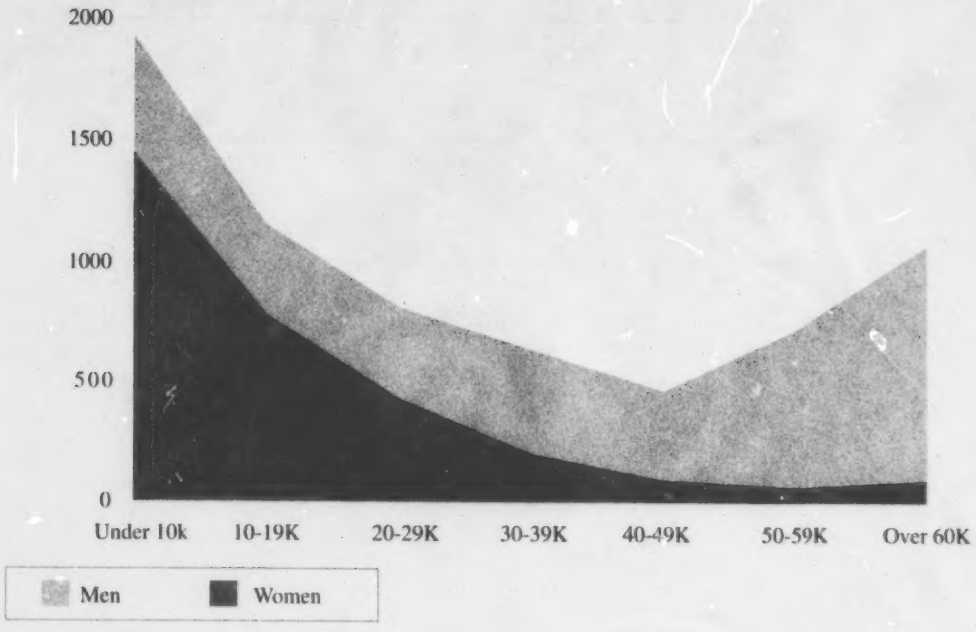

Figure 4.3 Income ddistribution for Hinton, 1996.

Although these median income variations give us some indication of how family incomes compare and change from one census year to the next, single number summaries do not provide any indication as to how employment income is distributed at the community level. The range of incomes in a community often varies significantly, with pockets of high incomes and low incomes associated with such factors as sex or occupation. Therefore, in order to observe household income levels more precisely, it is important to examine the distribution of incomes within a given locale. By examining a distribution, it becomes easier to measure the extent to which these relatively high median income values in the Foothills area are distributed within the local population.

Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 depict the difference in income for men and women in Hinton and Jasper. It is apparent from these figures that the majority of men earn incomes on the high end of the scale, while the majority of women earn incomes on the low end of the scale, illustrating a significant gap between the sexes. Total income thus approximates the bimodal distribution depicted in Figure 4.1. Other interesting aspects include: the sharp upswing in the line after $40,000 for male incomes in Hinton (Figure 3) compared to the reasonably flat line for male incomes in Jasper (Figure 4.4), the increasing proportion of residents in the high- and low-income categories in Figure 4.4, and the high frequency of low incomes for females in Jasper (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.6 illustrates differences in total income between comparison jurisdictions. The strongest representation of the bimodal distribution is in Hinton where the income distribution is more polarized than in Alberta as a whole. This means that more people report incomes on the high or low end of the distribution than incomes in the middle range—between $20,000 to $40,000. This finding is consistent with the existing literature that discusses primary (stable, high-wage, benefits) and secondary (unstable, low-wage, no benefits) labor markets. The outcome of such a segmented labor market will naturally be a bimodal income distribution. The polarization in incomes that results from these structural conditions fundamentally influences the composition and nature of community life.

Data presented thus far have been at the level of the individual. Although this level of detail is useful, one factor that may mediate the impact of a segmented labor market is the effect of household composition. Household income distributions may look very different than individual income distributions. These study communities are no exception. As Figures 4.3 and 4.5 indicate, many of the income differences in these communities are related to sex. Depending on the proportion of residents who come from dual-income families, some of the polarization depicted in the income gap between the sexes will likely be mitigated within household economic units, (i.e., a high-wage male paired with a low-wage female). Figures 4.7 and

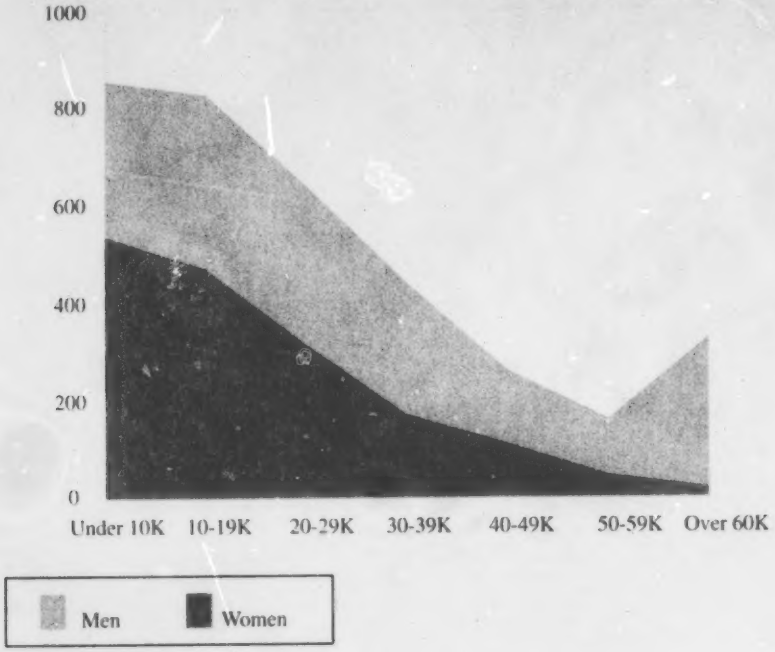

Figure 4.4 Income distribution for Jasper, 1996.

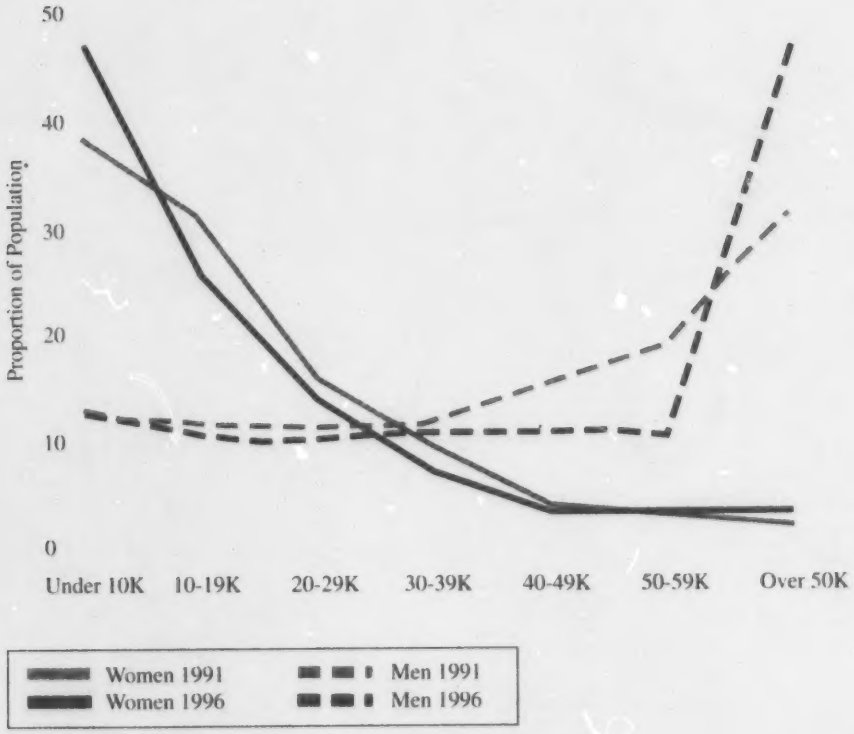

Figure 4.5 Income distribution for Hinton, 1991 and 1996.

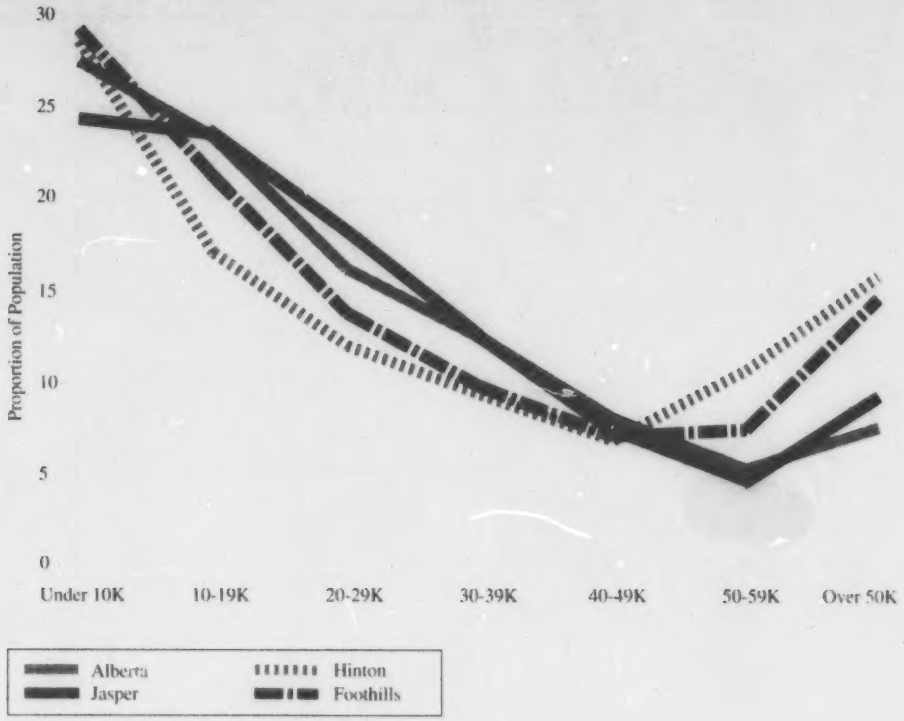

Figure 4.6 Income distribution for Alberta, Hinton, Jasper, Foothills, 1996.

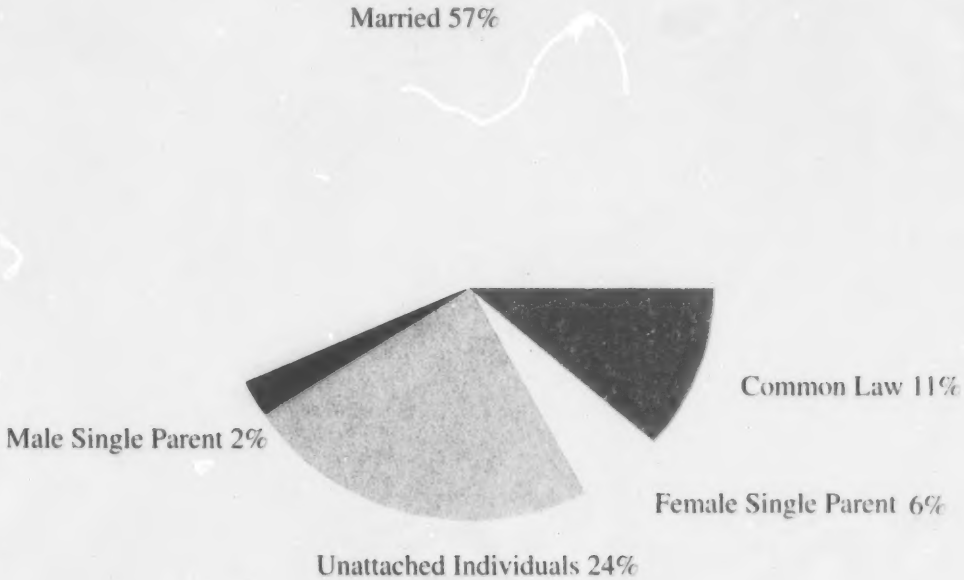

Figure 4.7 Census family characteristics, Hinton, 1996.

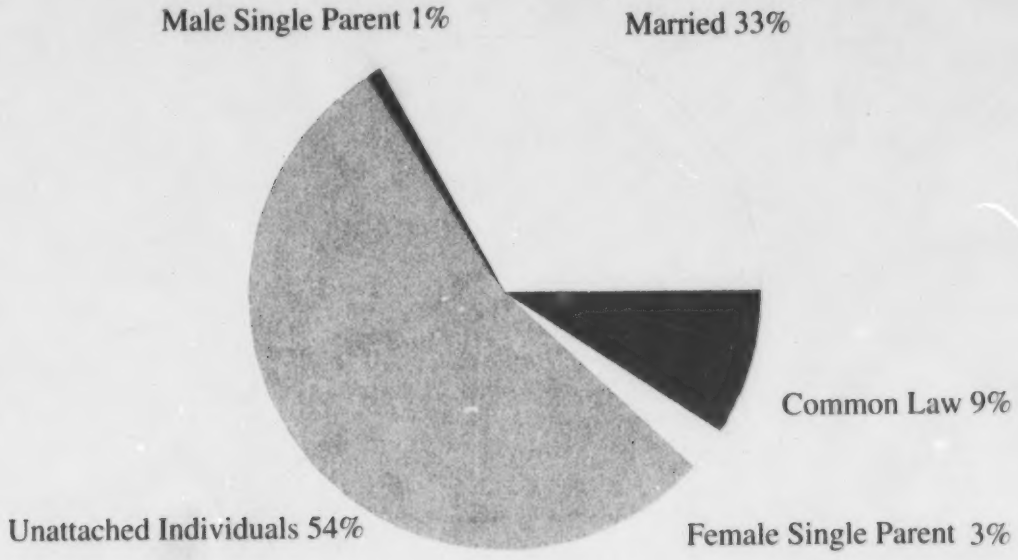

Figure 4.8 Census family characteristics, Jasper, 1996.

4.8 describe household composition in Hinton and Jasper. The pie chart for Hinton shows that 57% of residents are married, with an additional 11% in common-law households while only 24% of Hinton adults are unattached individuals. In comparison, Jasper has fewer dual-income households where, presumably, financial resources are shared.

Only 33% of individuals in Jasper are married and another 9% are in common-law households. Also, there are considerably more unattached individuals (54%) in Jasper than in Hinton. These figures play an important role in helping us understanding income distribution at the household level within these communities. Although low-income earners in Hinton are likely to benefit from family attachments, low-income earners in Jasper are much less likely to do so.

Another factor that exerts a strong influence on the income gap between the sexes in Hinton is the percent of males and females with full- and part-time employment. This issue is treated in greater detail in the employment chapter of this report but, to briefly summarize here, full- and part-time employment rates by sex in Hinton are quite different (67% full time for males, 45% full time for females, 33% part time for males, and 45% part time for females). The higher percentage of full-time employment for males naturally leads to higher returns in income.

In Jasper, the differences according to sex in full- and part-time work are equally pronounced. Full-time employment among women accounts for 35% of the workforce, whereas 65% of women worked part time. For men, only 58% are employed full time, and 42% part time. This difference in full-time and part-time work according to sex partly accounts for the income gap in Hinton and Jasper.

Figure 4.9 depicts the income distribution for households in Hinton and Jasper compared with Alberta and Canada[10]. It illustrates the effects of multiple-income households on the income distribution within a community. In contrast to Figure 4.6, the distributions in Figure 4.9 are not bimodal but more unimodal, with a high proportion of household incomes over

[10] Total household income refers to the income of a person or a group of persons who occupy the same dwelling. It may consist of a family group (census family) with or without other non-family persons, of two or more families sharing a dwelling, or a group of unrelated persons, or of one person living alone. The total income of an economic family is the sum of the total incomes of all members of that family. Family incomes are reported in Chapter 5, Figure 5.1.

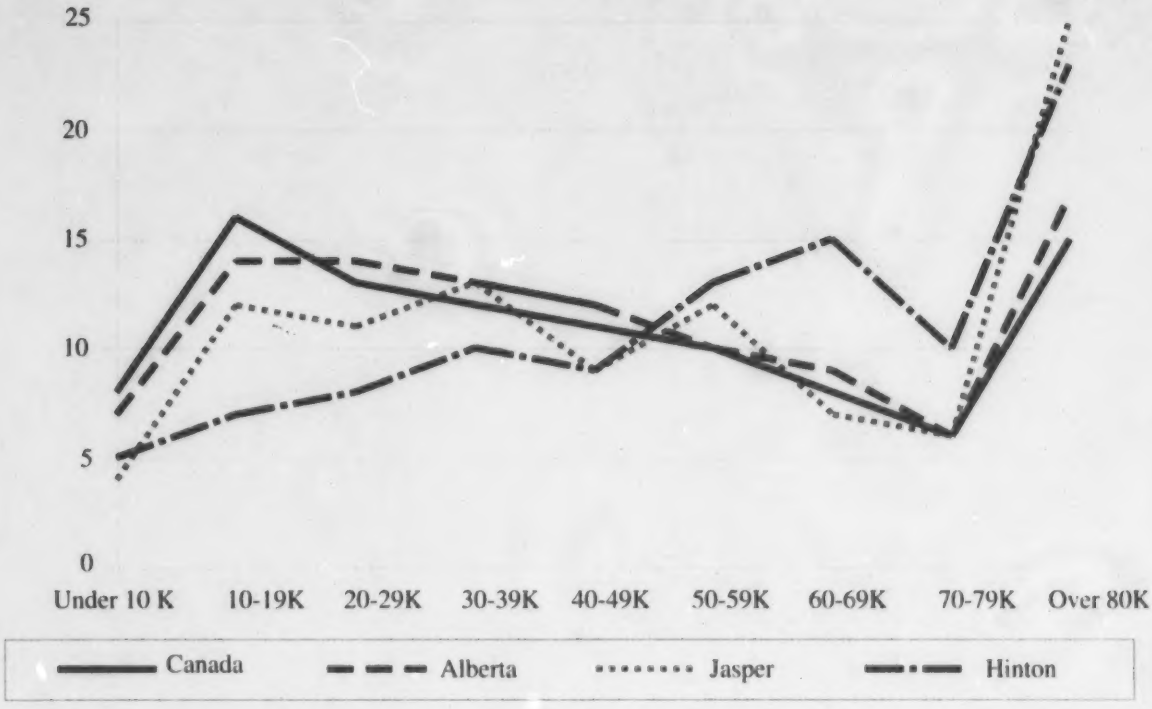

Figure 4.9 Household income for Hinton, Jasper, Alberta, and Canada, 1996.

$60,000 in both communities. In Jasper, 33% of households report incomes in the $20,000 to $50,000 range. The bimodal situation reported earlier is no longer apparent when total household income is included. In Hinton, 27% of households report income in the middle range and the highest proportion of households are at the high end of the scale. As expected, the polarization depicted in Figures 4.3 and 4.5 is mitigated within household economic units and the gap between high and low incomes is almost completely eliminated when the unit of analysis moves from the individual to the household. It is also interesting to note the larger population proportion at the low end of the income distribution for Alberta and Canada compared with the two Foothills Model Forest communities. These income conditions are discussed further in the next section as we integrate community perspectives on income distribution with the Statistics Canada data represented here.

4.6 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Income

Interviews with a wide range of residents provide insight into how disparities in income are perceived by community residents. On their own, census numbers on employment income will not reveal these more qualitative community characteristics. Combining census information with local perspectives on employment income expands our understanding of income gaps and concentrations, and how these features affect community life. Comments are organized into themes that emerge from interviews with residents. Some local perspectives are included in the text below and others are referenced in the Appendix. Community perspectives on income are organized into four related topics: social integration, income and community cohesion, sharing the wealth, and changing job markets.

4.6.1 Social Integration

For many single-industry resource towns, community character is inextricably linked to the employer. Mill managers play a key role in town management, and shop supervisors enjoy considerable social status. In Hinton, where more than one large industry prevails, the development of community organizations and character is marked less by a single-industry mentality

and more by the mixing of several large industrial forces. As other industrial sectors developed, pulp mill employees took on a less prominent role in community life. One senior resident notes the trend toward more social integration within and between employees and employers.

> The town was more stratified in terms of management and workers. Now there isn't that social stratification I don't think. It doesn't matter what you do for a living. Where in a one-industry town you are socially your job. If you are a foreman at work, you are a foreman at the curling club. That's what you are. That's not the case here. People don't only mix it up with people in their company, they mix it up with people in other companies and it's more relaxed. ***Senior Citizen***

These comments reflect some subtle differences in a community that is not specifically characterized by one industry. Recent retail developments and a growing tourism and recreation industry have contributed to this economic diversification. Residents often mention this informality among and between industry workers that is reflected in a casual and historically non-confrontational labor relations atmosphere. This sentiment is shared by others in the community who point out that people tend to socialize not so much around industry or professional affiliations but around common interests such as skiing or hunting.

4.6.2 Income and Community Cohesion

Although the perspectives stated above are shared by a large number of interviewed residents, not all segments of the community have such a positive sense of social cohesion. It is likely that those residents with similar financial resources—such as miners and mill workers—share common recreational or off-time interests. A common work schedule (based on 4 days on and 4 days off) also contributes to a sense of shared lifestyle. For these reasons, it is reasonable to assume that the community is less stratified by occupation or profession and more stratified by the ability to pay for and participate in "the good life" as it exists in the Foothills region. Residents' statements like the following lend weight to this perspective.

> So you'll find that the community is fragmented somewhat that way and there are the little social circles relevant to where you work, because of the size of the employment bases. As well I think it's, like you say, it's a good indication if you work in the same circles and have the same income potential then you can do a lot of the same things, like snowmobiling and....and all those types of things. And usually those are the people who can afford those types of things. ***Resource Industry Employee***

As an increasing proportion of workers in Hinton becomes employed in the service sector (see Chapter 3) through recreation, tourism, and retail enterprises, a growing number of Hinton residents are detached from the income benefits associated with high wages in the traditional employment sectors of forestry and mining. Many of these service-sector workers are newer residents and, as such, have fewer family or marriage ties to those employed in primary industries. Therefore, newcomers may find themselves financially ill-equipped to participate in some costly activities such as snowmobiling or hockey and, therefore, the community may become more stratified along income lines than occupation or education. A number of residents mention these trends within the community and the potential negative consequences for the community as a whole. Some statements are included here.

> When we arrived in the community we noticed it was much like a lot of other resource communities that I am familiar with. I guess the one thing that we noticed, both in arriving there and after living there for a while, is that there seems to be a very distinct difference between wealth—like those who have and those who don't. The mills and the mines employ so many people and pay very, very good wages and it seems that those who perhaps don't fall within that particular group make up the rest of the population base and the wages. There's a big wage discrepancy. It can be quite cliquey from a social stand point—based on income bracket and employment circles. ***Resource Industry Employee***
>
> There are two tiers here, the haves and the have nots. There are the ones that work in the industries that have everything and then there are the ones who don't have those jobs and they barely make it by from month to month. From paying their rent and their utilities they have no extra income to do anything. Even to get a pass to go swimming or any kind of activity like that or to join any of the organizations or clubs. It is just out of their reach, they can't afford that. ***Social Services Employee***

4.6.3 Sharing the Wealth

Even though most people agree that the gap between well paid and poorly paid employees in Hinton is wide and probably growing, some residents take the perspective that those who are working in low-wage jobs are often associated with, through family ties, people with high-paying jobs. In other words, most low-wage earners are essentially second-income earners—part of a dual-income family. For instance, many women work in local offices or restaurants and their employment income is probably inadequate to cover basic costs for a family living in Hinton. According to the numbers displayed in Figures 4.3 and 4.5, this generalization is likely very accurate. Most women in Hinton earn below-average incomes. But this information doesn't take into consideration the fact that many women are married or attached to families with more than one income. Figure 4.7 indicates that almost 68% of residents are married or common law. As a family member, their actual wealth is not accurately reflected by a single income. When asked about the income gap in Hinton, one person responded with a comment reflecting a fairly common view.

> You know I haven't seen very much [low income]. And I think it may be partly because if one person is employed in the family in the mill or the mine, then the wealth seems to get spread around. ***Tourism Industry employee***

Two perspectives are correct here: women generally receive lower wages than do men, and women's incomes often comprise the second family income. However, significant differences exist between male and female wages, and these differences are directly related to traditional sex-based divisions of labor. Many would consider that the income gap between the sexes does not constitute a problem, as many women in Hinton do benefit from the high incomes their spouses earn in the resource sectors. However, the structural situation of these women may be precarious. Not only are they dependent upon the health of the resource sectors in which their spouses work (which are subject to fluctuation due to commodity prices, substitution, and other global market and policy factors), but they are also dependent upon the health of their marriages. There may be a strong economic disincentive for a women to escape a bad marriage due to the potentially negative economic consequences. This type of secondary effect of resource dependence on quality of life for certain subpopulations should be explored further.

4.6.4 Changing Job Markets

Beyond observations about the income gap, some residents comment on why the gap exists and what can be expected in the years ahead. More than any other factor contributing to the disparity between rich and poor residents in Hinton, people mention the growth in service-sector jobs. Although on one hand, any kind of job creation is generally considered a good thing, local comparisons between natural resource-sector employment and service-sector employment are unavoidable. Many see the increasing gap between rich and poor residents as a function of service-sector underemployment and, while acknowledging the contribution the service sector makes to the local economy, take exception to the poor-quality jobs that are created:

> I think generally the employment is good for industrial workers, but it's not great for the service industry. Those people working in the service industries get paid minimum wages, and those jobs are hard to come by, and I think that employers are taking advantage by using part-time workers and not paying the people benefits. ***Provincial Park Warden***
>
> I think that there will be a steady demand for busboys and waitresses, part time close to minimum wage...so the financial health of Hinton is based clearly on the forest resource....and I work in the tourist industry and I know how little I get paid. ***Tourism Employee***

Other residents attribute the growing disparity between rich and poor to technology-driven change. The technological revolution leaves no area of society unaffected and certainly forestry and mining industries are no exception. More sophistication and automation translate into a need for highly skilled and high-salaried employees, while at the same time, reducing the need for unskilled workers in the forest and on the mine site. One pulp mill employee speaks to this trend directly.

> I see a rift developing. Either you work in the industry—be it mining or the forestry industry—or you don't. If you do, you can afford to live in this town; if you don't, you can't. And I see the gap widening as technology takes over and you can start harvesting more with less workers, there's going to be less employment....and that's definitely the direction they're heading in, both in the mills and the mines. So I see the gap widening. ***Pulp Mill Employee***

These perspectives provide a community-level view of the future of income distribution in Hinton. Although the concerns raised here are not unique to Hinton, there is a strong sense that change is occurring quickly and the consequences of such change will alter the character of community life. What was once a town characterized by its dependence on large-scale resource extraction, is perhaps less so today as employment opportunities shift into other sectors of the local economy. Residents observe this transition and the associated impact on income distribution in Hinton.

4.7 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Income

The main difference in incomes between the two communities is the lack of high-end jobs for men in Jasper. Median income in Jasper is lower than Hinton but the percentage increase in income between 1981 and 1990 is much greater for Jasper—suggesting that Jasper may close the median income gap between the two communities. The shape of the income distribution for Jasper is somewhat different than for Hinton. In Jasper, income distribution for men is relatively consistent across income levels while a larger proportion of female incomes falls into the low end of the distribution (Figure 4.5). Perspectives on income distribution in Jasper provide some insight into why income looks the way it does and how it might change in the future. Discussion is organized into three sections: managers and workers, middle class squeeze, and rapid policy shift.

4.7.1 *Managers and Workers*

Much of the difference in income distribution between these two communities is due to the nature of economic activity. As stated in Section 4.1, the bulk of Hinton's local economy is composed of a few large industries that, at least traditionally, have provided most of the jobs. In contrast, the bulk of Jasper's local economy is composed of service-sector businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets. Many owners of small-sized operations reside in Jasper but the owners of larger hotels and restaurants reside outside Jasper and, for the purpose of census numbers, report income outside the community. For this reason, the income gap reflected in Figure 4.4 is largely a function of income differences between resident managers (and/or owners) and workers, and is highlighted by a low proportion of individuals reporting income above $50,000. Some residents speak about what they consider to be a general misunderstanding regarding the "wealth of Jasper".

> If one looks at the statistics, and the health region has statistics that Hinton, in their per capita income, is a much richer town than Jasper is. I think it is not always looked at as such. From the outside it is always "Oh the rich Jasper." Yes we have quite a difference between the low-income families and the higher income families. There are two ends more than a rich big middle. ***Child Care Worker***

Another factor contributing to this manager-worker dichotomy is the increasing lack of employment alternatives for the educated middle-class. Parks Canada is employing fewer local residents by rolling back services and sub-contracting tasks like campground maintenance. Utility companies, Canadian National Railways (CNR), and other employers are also scaling back services in the Park which translates into fewer alternative employment opportunities for those living in the community.

> I think Jasper was somewhat more of an affluent community and I think the changes have taken place in the last couple of years. Fewer people working at the middle-income positions with the benefits that go with that in Parks or CN. More people working in the tourism industry. The last couple of years you really notice a huge difference. ***Social Services Employee***

Like Hinton, some people might point to dual-income families as a factor mitigating the disparity between male and female incomes. Although the disparity is not as large in Jasper because of the relatively even distribution of incomes for males, it is important to mention here the differences in family characteristics between Hinton and Jasper. Although a large proportion of Hinton residents are married or common law (68%), the same cannot be said for Jasper. Jasper family

characteristics are marked by fewer married or common-law family units (42%), thus fewer individuals benefiting from a combined family income. Combining this aspect of the community with many female residents in the low-income range and there may be more economic hardship in Jasper than one might first realize from the standard suite of employment indicators.

4.7.2 *Middle-Class Squeeze*

The previous discussion on declining middle-class job opportunities leads into an area of considerable concern to many residents of Jasper. Middle-class squeeze speaks to a number of factors converging on middle-income families that affect their ability to prosper. These factors include: increasing taxes and housing costs, more competition between businesses, and decreasing standards for service-sector employees.

> It seems to me that one of the overriding concerns in the town is the growth of Jasper and it's becoming more difficult for the average family to make a go of it here. ***Senior Citizen***
>
> A lot of the families right now are hanging on by a thread. Basically it has become very expensive in the past few years so things are going to be more expensive yet. With the decline in business and the splitting up of the same pie into smaller units, a lot of people are going to have less income and have to pay more money. ***Restaurant Owner***
>
> I have heard lots of discussion about how the fabric of the community will change. It will turn into a community where the elite, the wealthy who are rich enough to own their homes and pay the taxes and own a couple of businesses and so they are going to be wealthy and then there will be all the other people who work for that very low wage with no benefits and no unionized jobs and they will be basic rental situations always and they will be sharing tight quarters, so the division will get bigger between the haves and the have nots. I think it is kind of a microcosm of what is happening the world over. The richest 20% are becoming much richer and the poorest 25% are becoming much, much poorer. ***Park Warden***

These comments are part of a general theme in Foothills communities expressing concern over rising costs and income inequality. Although most people acknowledge the decline of employment opportunities for the middle class, residents differ regarding future opportunity. Optimistic thinkers point to a progressive and dynamic economy full of potential for those with some entrepreneurial spirit while others see opportunity only for the few with sufficient financial capital to take advantage of changing economic conditions. One point seems clear, however. Although census data indicate rising average incomes for the Foothills region, many residents do not share this perspective in their observations of community life and economic activity. Part of this skepticism likely comes from the noticeable gap in the distribution of employment income and a general concern about which side of the gap residents might eventually find themselves on.

4.7.3 *Rapid Policy Shift*

Part of the reason for such concern over middle-income squeeze in Jasper is the pace at which change is taking place. Change in the social and economic conditions of Jasper is part of the present reality for residents as Parks Canada continues to adjust its mandate toward town management. Proposed tax changes, property development, and business initiatives all contribute to a general sense of concern and restlessness as to how these changes will affect the community. In addition, larger businesses are seen to carry considerable weight when it comes to how these changes will eventually transpire. Some of these concerns are expressed below.

> There's some very wealthy people in business here who own a lot of property and have enormous influence with the government through Ottawa and locally through Parks superintendents who they cultivate and do favors for. ***Tour Operator***
>
> I think if taxes and land rights proceed as expected I think we will see a great exodus of lots of families in the community. You'll have very wealthy people who own the businesses and you'll have the people who work for them. It will become something like all the middle class moving to the next town down the way. ***Social Services Employee***

The general perspective here is that income distribution in Jasper is very much determined by the local economy and Parks Canada policy toward taxation, residence requirements, and corporate development. Disparities between rich and poor residents are part of recent changes; changes partially brought about by tourism and the business sector, but also brought about new policy directions on behalf of Parks Canada.

4.8 Discussion

Conclusions from the census data on income distribution are quite straightforward. Median incomes are quite high in the Foothills region. However, the income distribution for the region is polarized, with the majority of women on the low end of the scale and the majority of men on the high end. Hinton is more acutely bimodal in its "gendered" income distribution than is Jasper.

The reported employment statistics are perceived and understood by residents in various ways. Both communities talk about a "rift" or a "gap" between rich and poor. Service-sector growth is creating more jobs at the lower end of the pay scale. In 1996, more than 45% of the working-aged Hinton population made less than $20,000 per year. Yet, in the same year, the median income in Hinton was $58,028. Similarly in Jasper, just over 48% of the population earned less than $20,000 per year. When it comes to women, as the statistics indicate, very few are finding jobs that pay above-average wages. However, it is clear that, although income opportunities for women are constrained, due to family patterns, not all women with low incomes necessarily live in low-income households.

Can one expect this gap in income to grow or shrink? If global trends and local opinion provide some indication, there is every reason to expect the gap between rich and poor residents to grow. Foothills' industries are globally competitive. Jasper's tourism base is also increasingly international in scope. Technology and global competition will continue to play an important role in defining job opportunity and employment conditions locally. Unfortunately, it may be difficult for small communities such as Hinton and Jasper to control their own destinies given their close links to international market forces.

What are the consequences of an income gap? With respect to the question of community sustainability, is the current gap between "haves" and "have nots" within socially acceptable limits? And if income distribution is currently within socially accepted limits, when might that line of acceptability be crossed given the trend toward the widening of that gap? How will the complexion of a community change if the income gap widens? These are questions that community leaders and policy makers must address. The problems speak directly to the issue of shared resources and shared benefits. Are the financial benefits of the local resource base equitably distributed to members of the local community? What can be done to foster more economic participation? How can women, youth, and aboriginal populations benefit more fully from the resource-based economy? Local solutions are required and to consider some of these questions will initiate the kind of dialogue required to generate them.

4.9 Appendix

4.9.1 *Hinton: Additional Statements on Income*

> I don't think you see the segregation in this town that you see in a lot of other towns. I recall if you lived on the north side of the track you just didn't associate with someone on the south side. I don't think that exists here. There was, for a while, a hill and valley deal. The valley was the upper-level income people. The hill was where people who lived in Hinton originally were. And even that disappeared and I think it's almost the reverse now. People in the valley are the long-time, settled residents and people up on the hill are the newer ones. Of course, now we have the Thompson subdivision. So the actual areas and the pockets have changed, definitely changed. But I don't think it ever was a really discriminatory town. I never ever saw it in the schools. ***Senior Citizen***

> What about low-income families in Hinton? It's a small group compared to the big picture. And most of them are second income. And not very many people are supporting families. Most families are two-income families. ***Business Owner***

I kind of find that the bulk of the employment seems to be with the mines and the mills, and a lot of the service industry is geared toward those industries. But when it comes down to the flipping burger level, that sort of thing, a lot of that is teenagers and that sort of thing, where I don't think that the level that they're at or the stage that they're at in their life, they're going to be expecting to make 70K a year doing anything. I don't think it's really created two classes of people or anything, because I think a lot of those people that are flipping burgers, are usually part of a family, where the main breadwinner is working at the mine or the mill, and they have a fairly good social life in any event. I think the majority of people are basically hard working, labor sort. ***RCMP***

I think the kids are bored. What I can tell you is it's a lot of probably lower income kids. They have nothing else to do and that's their playground almost.... The ones that I know personally are lower income kids, probably single-parent families. They tend to get into booze and drugs quite young. ***Business Owner***

There was the poor, there was the medium people and there was the rich. Now, you're either poor or rich. No in between. Nothing. ***Mill Worker***

I see a lot of social problems with drugs, alcohol abuse, spousal and domestic situations. The divorce rate is very high. I think sometimes that we are too well off, that the high standard of living is as much a curse as a blessing. ***Clergy***

Economically, what it seemed like was people who had money and people who didn't. It was either you worked for the mill or the mines and had that position and had it for years, or you didn't. There didn't seem to be any sort of laboring class in between. Which I found to be quite interesting. In one way there were classes, but it didn't seem to have that hierarchy at all. You are either living wealthy or you are in poverty. ***Social Service Employee***

I think the growth in tourism will probably be a healthy thing, except probably not so healthy in terms of the young worker. The younger worker who may be immature in their attitude toward school and then find themselves in a bit of an economic trap, having a low income that makes it hard to increase their opportunities. ***School Teacher***

They have women driving trucks out at the Greg River Mine. That sure isn't something I'd want to do. But it is hard for women to get good-paying jobs unless you are at the mines or the mill. Otherwise it's just 6 to 7 bucks an hour. ***Social Worker***

There are quite a few women who work in the mine. I think it depends on your education and your training and the opportunities. If you are in the mine in an office-type setting, but then that is not one of the good-paying jobs at the mine. You have to have some sort of heavy equipment operator or something like that to get one of the better paying jobs, or a ticket, like a trades ticket and there is nothing like that in Hinton. I know one woman that is taking an apprenticeship program to be a mechanic and other than that...I know one lady that went through welding apprentice. I think most women here would go to chamber maid or waitressing. They don't think about the trades. ***Women's Shelter***

4.9.2 Jasper: Additional Statements on Income

It would be a dramatic hit to the community. It would change the nature of the town almost completely because the CN population to a large degree provides a whole group of middle-class income with benefits type of people. There are some with the Parks but the majority are CN. ***Social Services Employee***

It seems to me that one of the overriding concerns in the town is the growth of Jasper and it's becoming more difficult for the average family to make a go of it here. ***Social Services Employee***

I think it's sympathy [toward temporary residents] more than anything else. The fact that they work for almost nothing, they live in closets. And they are not taken care of very well by the people who ought to

be taking care of them. It will be interesting to see if this trend we see of people living in vans and on the streets, if that will change the perception, because they're not so much hidden away in a closet somewhere. ***Senior Citizen***

Tax is going to be 10% and then you pay provincial and school tax on top of that. I don't think people can afford it. They've got a set income and they don't have any money saved up. I don't think they can live here. ***Senior Citizen***

It's a minority that don't have two-income family. ***Tour Operator***

Well I think the people that lived here a long time ago, it seems to me that they like it the way it was. But the new businesses are more aggressive I think and want to make the changes that help them. There are a lot of things that don't seem exactly fair but of course that's the same everywhere. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. ***Senior Citizen***

I think the social inequality is a big one, we're losing the middle class here. ***Social Services Employee***

4.9.3 *Census Tables*

Table 4.1 Median household income*, 1981 - 1996

Census Divisions	Median Household Income: 1996	1991	1986	1981
Hinton	58,028	56,914	53,472	49,180
Yellowhead	41,704	39,591	33,563	34,718
Jasper	50,364	50,385	41,288	41,359
Foothills	50,169	48,829	43,347	42,007
Edson	41,429	48,094	41,686	43,507
Grande Cache	62,176	58,919	52,471	50,214
Whitecourt	56,649	52,398	41,234	42,889
Edmonton	38,555	40,703	38,126	40,808
Alberta	42,701	43,255	39,761	40,993
Canada	40,209	41,822	37,122	35578

* Income adjusted to 1996 dollars

Table 4.2 Full-time and part-time employment and income, 1996

Census Divisions	Number of full time employed: males	females	Average full-time employment income: males	females	Number of part time employed: males	females	Average part-time employment income: males	females
Hinton	2,200	880	50,557	25,214	1,060	1,570	24,282	9,756
Yellowhead	1,540	765	39,336	23,181	1,460	1,310	23,317	9,694
Jasper	950	515	40,103	26,519	715	950	19,893	12,021
Foothills	4,690	2,160	42,510	25,010	3,235	3,830	23,101	10,143
Edson	1,365	660	45,125	22,272	860	1,020	21,199	9,336
Grande Cache	940	365	53,613	28,689	490	640	24,327	9,988
Whitecourt	1,545	785	52,021	24,752	1,090	1,195	17,567	11,070
Edmonton	97,760	69,995	41,043	28,795	77,535	85,690	17,567	12,107
Alberta	468,950	293,110	42,725	28,091	332,770	380,840	19,055	11,942
Canada	4,514,850	2,998,940	42,488	30,130	3,329,880	3,712,545	18,672	12,727

Table 4.3 Full-time and part-time employment and income, 1986

Census Divisions	Number of full time employed		Average full-time employment income		Number of part time employed		Average part-time employment income	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	1,725	660	45,626	25,427	1,150	1,200	26,504	9,453
Yellowhead	1,270	370	34,035	21,884	1,195	970	21,642	8,027
Jasper	795	280	36,131	24,837	745	920	15,143	10,550
Foothills	3,795	1,310	39,713	25,490	3,090	3,090	21,863	9,314
Edson	1,165	540	44,547	24,304	1,045	1,060	22,166	9,100
Grande Cache	545	195	44,876	27,172	560	545	26,900	9,493
Whitecourt	990	415	41,915	22,523	870	875	20,242	9,126
Edmonton	97,170	65,230	40,695	27,011	80,580	85,290	16,769	10,837
Alberta	416,505	226,810	40,699	26,430	310,705	336,730	17,792	10,590
Canada	4,249,365	2,331,515	38,435	25,194	3,033,575	3,240,035	16,979	10,095

Table 4.4 Average employment and income, 1981 and 1996

Census Divisions	Number of FT & PT* employed 1996		Average FT & PT employment income 1996		Number of FT & PT employed 1981		Average FT & PT employment income 1981	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
Hinton	3,260	2,450	37,420	17,485	2,785	1,780	34,551	13,170
Yellowhead	3,000	2,075	31,627	16,438	2,835	1,460	29,649	12,089
Jasper	1,665	1,465	29,998	20,270	1,390	1,035	28,285	13,998
Foothills	7,925	5,990	33,666	17,802	7,010	4,275	31,296	12,987
Edson	2,260	1,725	35,831	14,357	1,980	1,260	32,503	12,595
Grande Cache	1,460	1,060	42,867	16,873	1,495	865	23,288	13,794
Whitecourt	2,670	2,055	41,071	16,387	1,950	1,365	31,206	11,842
Edmonton	175,295	155,685	31,627	20,451	181,985	140,385	31,328	16,376
Alberta	801,720	673,950	30,890	20,017	730,470	510,235	31,565	15,225
Canada	7,191,125	6,127,615	31,117	19,208	7,207,610	5,065,640	28,370	14,801

* FT = full-time; PT = part-time.

Table 4.5 Population by income distribution and sex, Hinton, Alberta, and Canada, 1996

Income Range	Hinton		Jasper		Foothills		Alberta		Canada	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
15+ yr. with income	3,635	3,105	1,845	1,670	9,125	7,585	980,320	940,265	10,516,800	10,399,950
under $1,000	105	220	30	45	325	485	46,290	59,585	533,690	645,215
1,000-2,999	115	345	50	80	390	720	39,570	64,895	417,960	640,345
3,000-4,999	80	205	60	120	225	485	31,405	54,625	350,295	568,155
5,000-6,999	95	265	75	130	285	725	34,490	60,330	416,570	661,850
7,000-9,999	90	405	105	160	405	835	48,405	88,095	604,335	981,730
10,000-14,999	180	450	150	265	820	1,300	97,915	155,335	1,092,975	1,825,895
15,000-19,999	190	325	205	205	645	785	84,670	109,580	908,500	1,174,600
20,000-24,999	150	240	155	205	590	655	78,500	87,930	863,090	921,755
25,000-29,999	225	190	170	110	595	445	72,745	70,730	819,785	778,080
30,000-39,999	430	200	270	170	1,095	530	143,815	93,925	1,502,120	1,086,975
40,000-49,999	365	95	150	110	885	285	105,465	47,590	1,110,255	555,230
50,000 and over	1,620	160	420	65	2,845	310	197,030	47,670	1,897,230	56,0115

Table 4.6 Households by income distribution for selected jurisdictions, 1996

Distribution	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	Jasper
All private households	10,820,050	979,175	3,435	1,550
Under 10,000	865,955	66,115	160	55
10,000-19,999	1,724,510	132,580	250	185
20,000-29,999	1,453,680	133,080	265	175
30,000-39,999	1,340,905	123,810	350	195
40,000-49,999	1,215,060	114,800	320	140
50,000-59,999	1,053,970	101,300	460	190
60,000-69,999	849,865	83,100	515	105
70,000 and over	2,316,120	224,385	1,110	490
Average income	48,552	51,118	58,796	55,654
Median income	40,209	42,701	58,028	50,364

Table 4.7 Percent of population by income range and sex, 1996

	Hinton		Foothills		Alberta		Canada	
Income range	% males	% females	% males	%females	% males	% females	% males	% females
15 yr. + w. income	3,635	3,105	9,125	7,585	980,320	940,265	10,516,800	10,399,950
under $1,000	1.6	3.3	1.9	2.9	2.4	3.1	2.6	3.1
1,000-2,999	1.7	5.1	2.3	4.3	2.1	3.4	2.0	3.1
3,000-4,999	1.2	3.0	1.3	2.9	1.6	2.8	1.7	2.7
5,000-6,999	1.4	3.9	1.7	4.3	1.8	3.1	2.0	3.2
7,000-9,999	1.3	6.0	2.4	5.0	2.5	4.6	2.9	4.7
10,000-14,999	2.7	6.7	4.9	7.8	5.1	8.1	5.2	8.7
15,000-19,999	2.8	4.8	3.9	4.7	4.4	5.7	4.3	5.6
20,000-24,999	2.2	3.6	3.5	3.9	4.1	4.6	4.1	4.4
25,000-29,999	3.3	2.8	3.6	2.7	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.7
30,000-39,999	6.4	3.0	6.6	3.2	7.5	4.9	7.2	5.2
40,000-49,999	5.4	1.4	5.3	1.7	5.5	2.5	5.3	2.7
50,000 and over	24.0	2.4	17.0	1.9	10.3	2.5	9.1	2.7
Percent total	54.0	46.0	54.4	45.3	51.0	49.0	50.3	49.7

Table 4.8 Census family characteristics, 1996

Census Divisions	Now-married families	Common-law families	One-parent families	Male parent	Female parent	# unattached individuals
Hinton	2,070	410	305	85	215	860
Yellowhead	2,100	305	190	55	130	770
Jasper	655	180	75	20	55	1,070
Foothills	4,825	895	570	160	400	2,700
Edson	655	180	75	20	55	870
Grande Cache	935	170	120	25	90	230
Whitecourt	2,100	305	190	55	130	810
Edmonton	117,395	16,380	27,830	4,500	23,330	95,945
Alberta	552,760	72,320	92,485	16,550	75,930	331,050
Canada	5,779,720	920,640	1,137,510	192,275	945,235	3,640,065

Chapter 5.
POVERTY

5.1 Objective

To assess the extent to which poverty exists in the Foothills Model Forest by examining the incidence of low income and other objective measures of poverty. This information will be supplemented with narrative accounts of poverty from residents of the region.

5.2 Rationale

This assessment of poverty in Foothills Model Forest communities focuses on the most disadvantaged of community residents. By causal definition, these residents are receiving minimal benefit from wealth generated by local commercial and industrial activity. Describing the conditions of economic hardship will provide a basis of discussion regarding the historic developments, current conditions, and future predictions regarding poverty in the region. Ultimately, examining poverty-related conditions may lead to ways of alleviating strained circumstances and enabling more access to the vibrant economic sectors of the Foothills Model Forest.

5.3 Low Income and Poverty

Low income, economic misfortune, strain, insolvency—these are a few of the terms used to describe the proportion of residents who live in conditions well below an average standard of living. Average standards obviously vary from place to place, and between countries the variation can be quite dramatic. When we discuss poverty in Canada, conditions are rarely characterized by absolute destitution. Numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations exist to assist those in need. Indeed, Canada prides itself, even among industrialized nations, on its comprehensive social safety net.

When people talk about poverty in Canada, they are most often talking about *relative* poverty as opposed to *absolute* poverty. Absolute poverty occurs when people are unable to marshal sufficient resources to support a minimum of physical health and efficiency. Relative poverty is not a level of absolute deprivation but rather a minimum standard of living that is culturally defined.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of literature exploring the relationship between rural poverty and natural resource dependence. The most comprehensive work toward this end was a Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty (RRS Task Force, 1993). One group of researchers in this task force paid particular attention to persistent rural poverty in natural resource-dependent communities, documenting four distinct but interacting theories that may explain the persistence of rural poverty in forestry-, fishing-, and mining-dependent communities. These include: (1) the neo-classical economic theory of human capital, (2) structural theories that focus on the restructuring of rural economies, (3) a theory on the power base of natural resource bureaucracies, and (4) a theory on the social construction of nature. From these theoretical starting points, researchers have published numerous findings in subsequent years. For instance, Peluso *et al.* (1994) provide insightful comments on the nature of poverty in resource-dependent communities, suggesting that women and minorities are more vulnerable to poverty than others, and that attention needs to be paid to differences in individual, household, and community units of analysis. West (1994) focuses on the role natural resource bureaucracies play in creating pockets of poverty. More recently, Freudenburg and Gramling (1998: 571) report that "quantitative studies [see Cook, 1995; Overdevest and Green, 1995] have found that mining- and logging-dependent regions tend to have higher levels of poverty than do even the counties dependent on the country's best-known example of a declining industry, namely, agriculture, or on the notoriously low-wage industry of tourism."

From a Canadian perspective, the drawback to much of this literature is that it deals with the rural context in the United States. Canadian researchers have been much slower to address rural poverty, but some headway is being made with

groups such as the Canadian Rural Restructuring Foundation, based in Brandon, Manitoba, and ongoing research at the Canadian Forest Service. Furthermore, there is every indication that the relationship between natural resource dependence and rural poverty may be, or has the potential to be, more acute in Canada than in the United States. The heavy dependence on natural resources across all regions of Canada, coupled with recent economic events such as mill closures in British Columbia, and a reworking of the social safety net, all suggest an important area of exploration for social scientists and an opportunity to inform decision makers on a particularly important problem in rural settings.

One of the most frequently used measures of poverty in Canada is the *incidence of low income* published by Statistics Canada and defined as the proportion of families or individuals below the *low income cut-off* (LICO). This cut-off income is based on a general assumption that families or individuals spending 70% or more of their income on basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing) are in "strained" circumstances. Low income cut-offs are set at varying income levels depending on family size and degree of urbanization, indicating higher costs for larger families and larger urban centers. Based on 1995 data for small-urban regions (below 30,000 people), the low income cut-offs for families and individuals are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Low income cut-offs for small urban regions

Family size	Low income cut-off
1	$13,373
2	$16,716
3	$20,790
4	$25,167

Source: Statistics Canada, 1997.

Based on this Canada-specific definition and the accompanying measure of economic distress, any single resident living in a small urban center making less than $1,100 a month ($13,200 per year) is considered to be in strained economic circumstances. A family of three, making less than $1,700 is also considered to be in strained economic circumstances. Although the cut-off values are differentiated by family size and the size of community, they do not take into consideration the variation in basic living costs between communities of comparable size. For instance, the cut-offs for Hinton and Jasper are the same as cut-offs for Olds, Alberta or Yorkton, Saskatchewan, communities which may have very different costs of living.

Statistics Canada refrains from drawing a direct connection between low-income cutoffs and poverty. They argue that there is no internationally recognized definition of poverty—unlike measures such as employment and gross domestic product (GDP). In the absence of a clear definition, measurements of poverty in Canada remain a subjective exercise and open to debate (Feliegi, 1997). Nonetheless, national organizations such as the *National Council of Welfare* use the incidence of low income without hesitation. They state that, *"the cut-offs are a useful tool for defining and analyzing the significantly large portion of the Canadian population with low incomes"* (National Council of Welfare, 1998). This report on poverty in the Foothills Model Forest makes extensive use of low-income figures as a relative measure of poverty. Whether low income cut-offs accurately reflect the actual number of families and individuals experiencing strained circumstances in the Foothills region is debatable and a large part of the discussion in Sections 5.5 and 5.6 is dedicated to this issue.

In Hinton and Jasper, the average size of a family is approximately 3.5 individuals so if we calculate a low-income cut-off of less than $20,000, approximately 10% of the population falls below this income level. Figure 5.1[11] approximates this relatively small proportion of residents within the dotted box.

[11] Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada, Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B, Ottawa. Supply and Services Canada, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada.

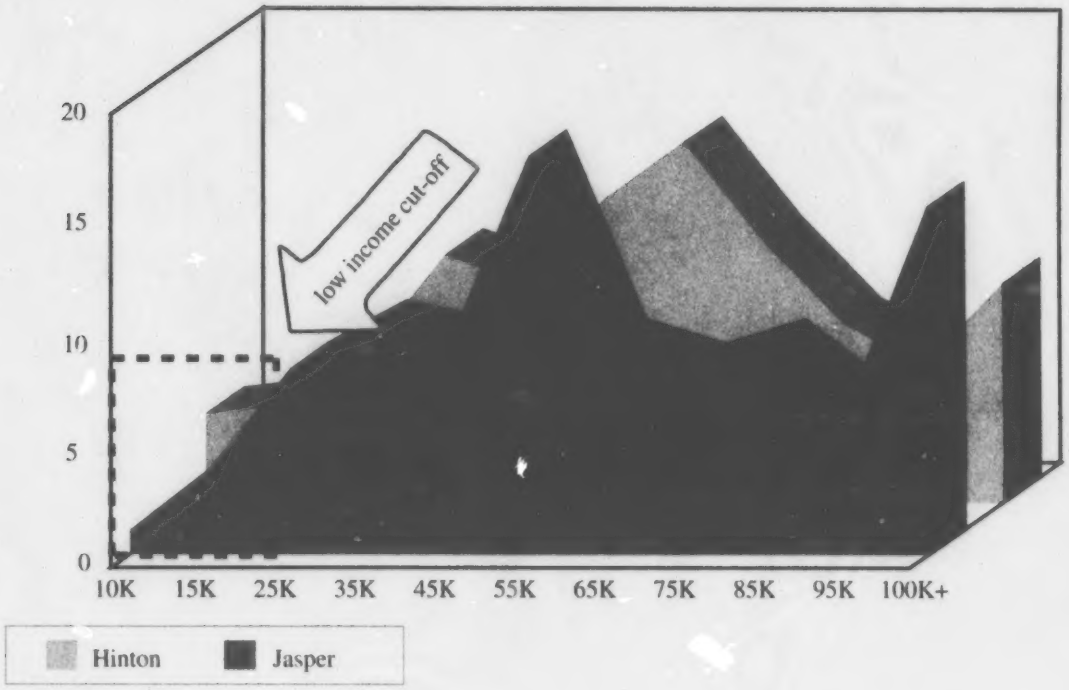

Figure 5.1 Family income distribution for Hinton and Jasper, 1996.

5.4 Measures of Poverty

Statistics Canada measures the incidence of low income at two levels. The first measurement of low income considers the *economic family* which is defined as a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common law or adoption. In this case, household income meets the basic needs of more than one individual. The second measure of low income examines *unattached individuals*. "Unattached individuals" refers to household members who are not members of an economic family. For example, a single person living in shared accommodation or living alone would fall into this category. Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 depict the proportion of residents with low income for economic families and for unattached individuals. Figure 5.2 provides an initial overview of low-income status and the sizeable difference in numbers between individuals and families with low income.

In each jurisdiction, a significantly higher proportion of unattached individuals report low income than do economic families. Hinton reports the lowest proportion of unattached individuals with low income, while Edmonton reports the highest. Jasper reports few low-income families. However, the difference between unattached and attached Jasper residents is more prominent than in other jurisdictions, indicating that the gap between family and individual incomes is quite wide. All areas in the Foothills Model Forest report a lower incidence of low income among unattached individuals than in the province as a whole.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 provide a sense of how the incidence of low income changed from 1981 to 1996. All Foothills jurisdictions report a peak in low-income economic families in the 1986 census, with lower numbers reported in 1991. For 1996, the trends are mixed. The incidence of low income for some groups, such as families in Jasper and individuals in YH 94, continue to decline; with other groups, such as families in Hinton and, most notably, single individuals living in Jasper, the trends are higher. The Jasper statistic in Figure 5.4 is the most striking, with a 16% jump in the incidence of low income for unattached individuals. On the whole, the incidence of low income is generally lower for economic families and generally higher for unattached individuals in the Foothills Model Forest.

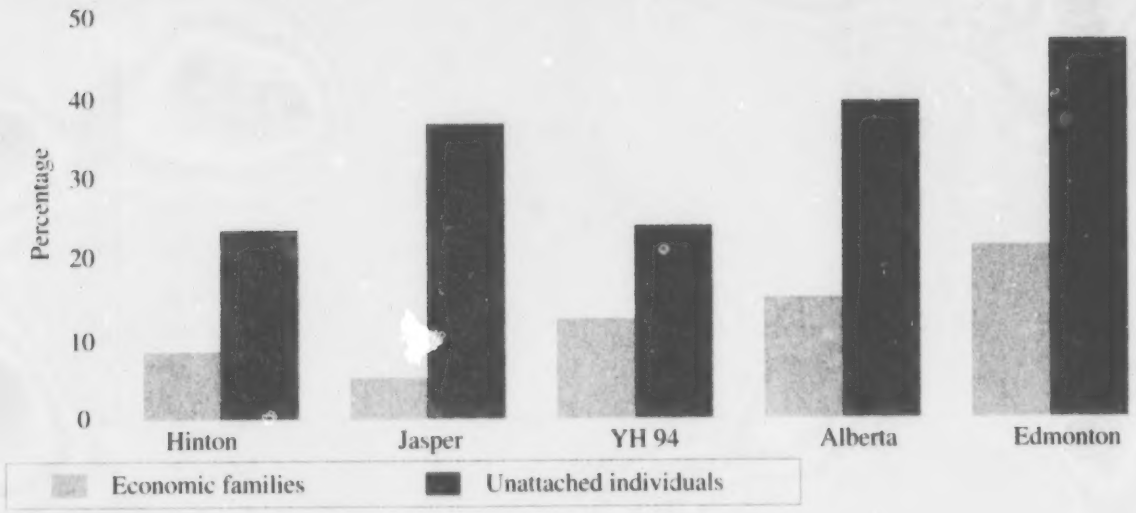

Figure 5.2 Incidence of low income by family and individual, 1996.

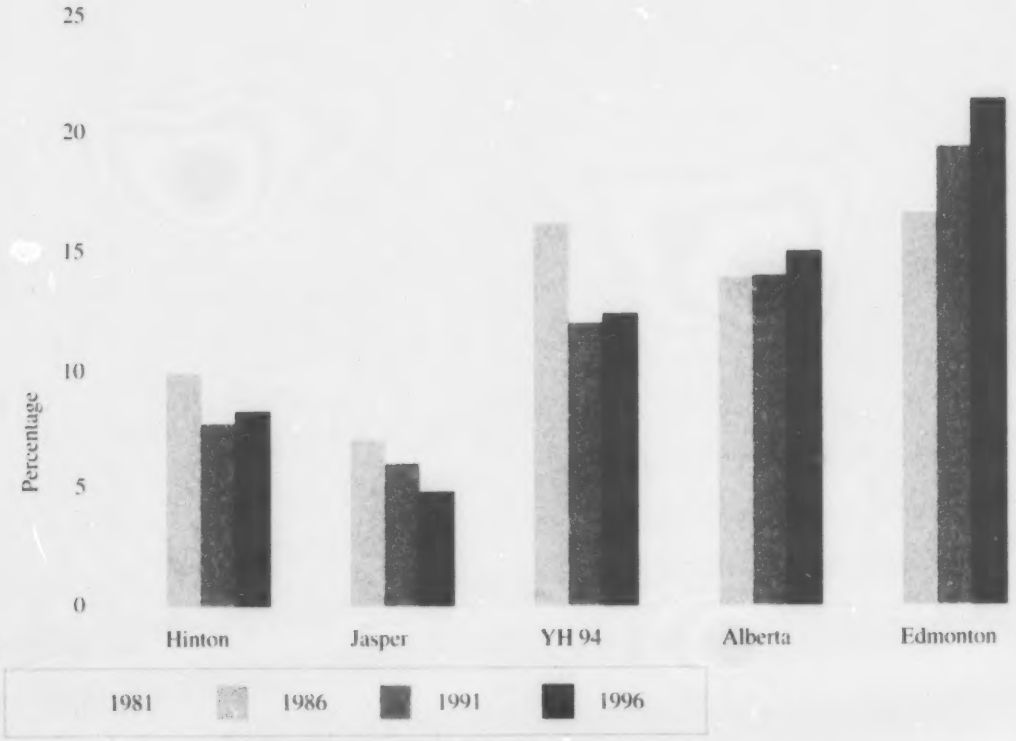

Figure 5.3 Incidence of low income for economic families, 1981–1996.

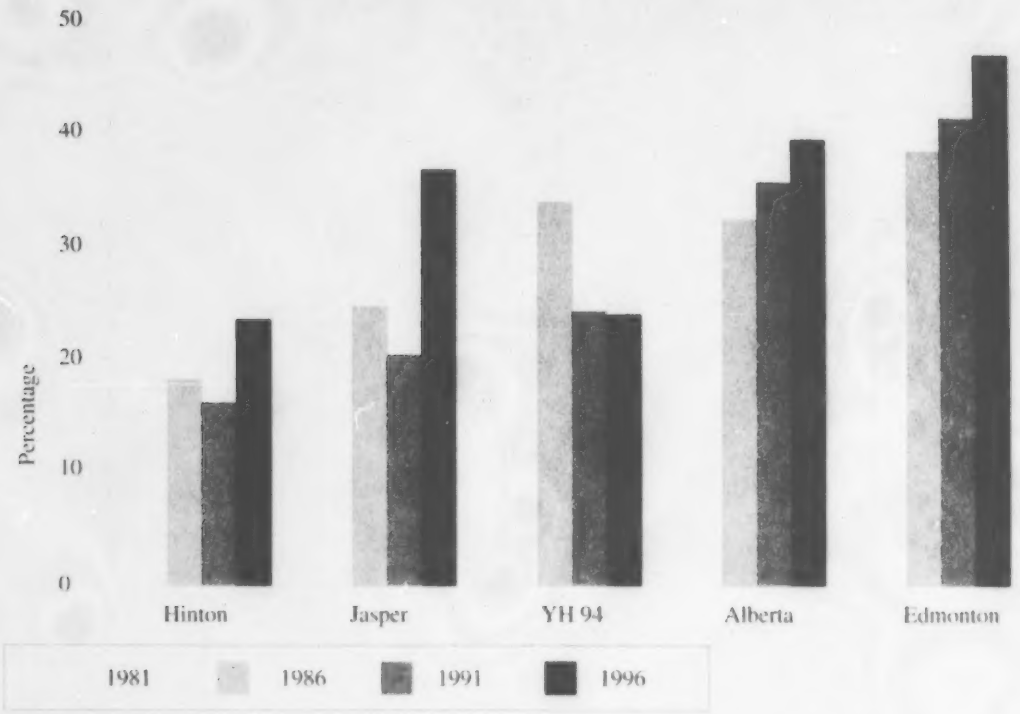

Figure 5.4 Incidence of low income for unattached individuals, 1981–1996.

Although the preceding figures portray the actual number of family units and unattached individuals considered to be in strained economic circumstances, Figure 5.5 reports the proportion of residents in low-income family units. This figure complements Figure 5.3 by providing insight into the composition of family units. For instance, the incidence of low income for economic families in Jasper declined approximately 3% from 1986 to 1996. During the same period, Figure 5.5 shows an increase in the size of low-income family units in Jasper. Taken together, the data show that low-income family units are decreasing but the size of those family units is increasing. Add to this the dramatic increase in low income among unattached individuals and there is consistent statistical information showing a larger proportion of Jasper residents living in low-income circumstances.

In addition to the figures above, one important determinant of the overall risk of poverty is family type. Specifically, analysts are taking notice of the sizeable proportion of single-parent families in low-income situations. According to the National Council of Welfare, the national poverty rate for single mothers in 1996 was more than 61% (National Council of Welfare, 1998). Single mothers are very likely to find themselves in low-income situations and, therefore, face significant financial strain and impoverished conditions. To the extent that single-parent families exist in the Foothills Model Forest, this fact may serve as an important indicator of current or future low-income family status in the region. Detailed family characteristics are reported in Section 5.6 but some data are included here to provide some sense of how prevalent this determinant of poverty is within the Foothills Model Forest. Figure 5.6 shows that Foothills has slightly fewer single-parent families than do Edmonton or Alberta. Single-parent families, therefore, are probably not a significant factor in explaining low income in the Foothills Model Forest. Furthermore, rural Foothills (YH 94) has the highest incidence of two-parent families, while at the same time reporting the highest incidence of low income within the Model Forest area (Figure 5.3). For this jurisdiction in particular, factors other than single-parent families must explain conditions of economic hardship.

The last two figures (5.7 and 5.8) presented here are based on welfare data. Social assistance (welfare) is considered to be the service of last resort for Canadians who have exhausted all other means of support and require government assistance to purchase basic items such as food and shelter. There are four main groups of people who receive benefits from the

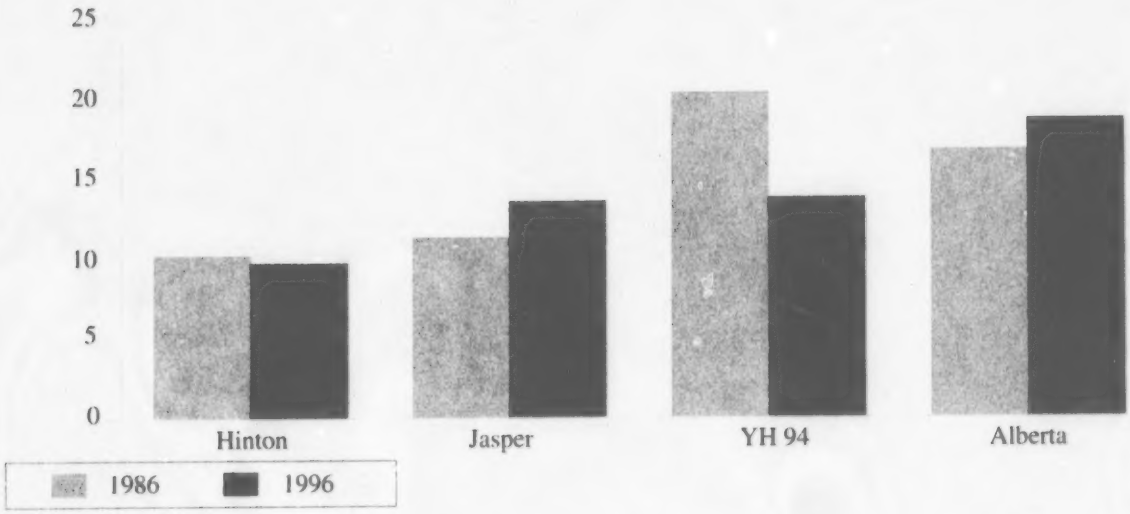

Figure 5.5 Persons in low-income family units, 1988–1996.

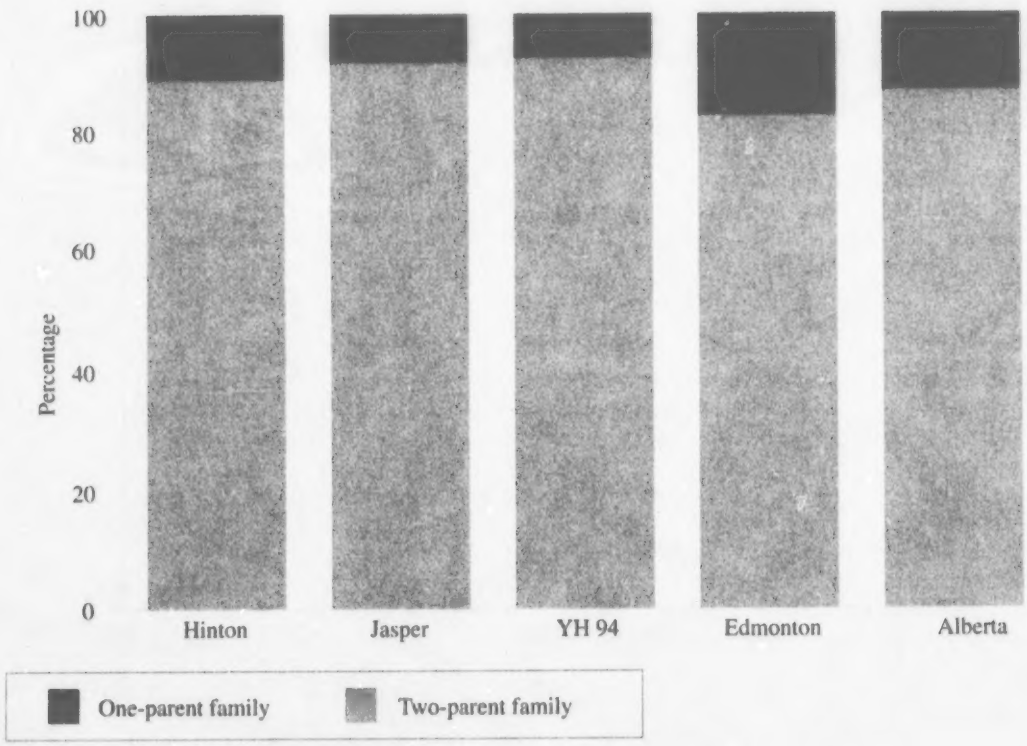

Figure 5.6 Percentage of two- versus one-parent families, 1996.

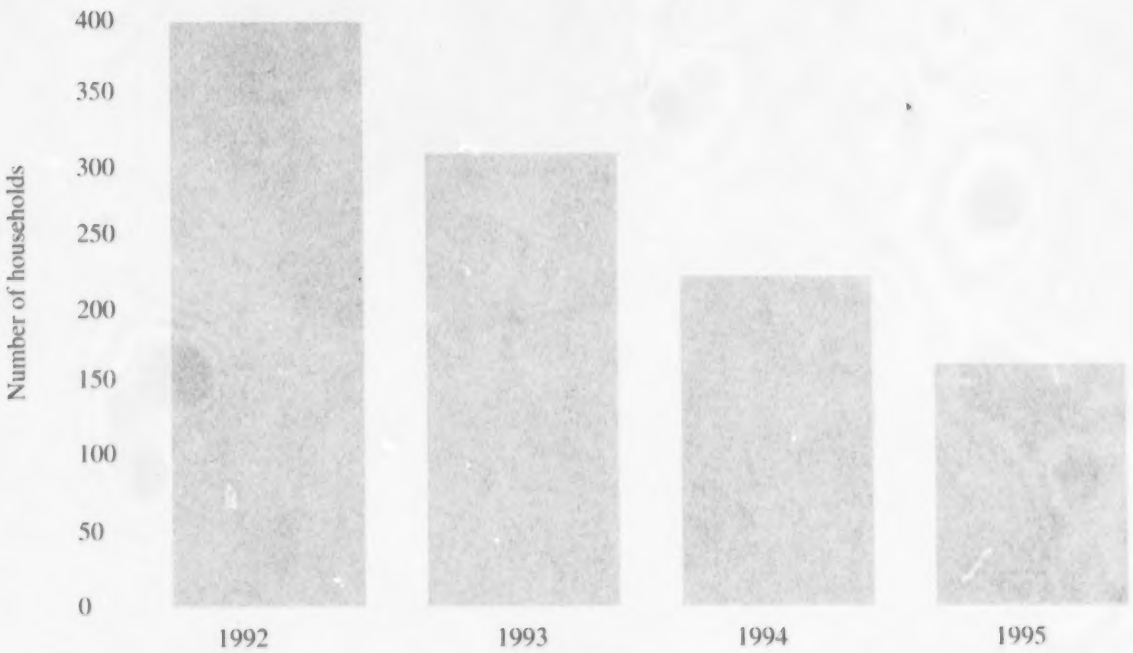

Figure 5.7 Average caseload in the Hinton District, 1992–1995.

Alberta Department of Family and Social Service (FSS) in Hinton: employable persons not currently employed, long-term assured-income cases, temporary cases, and persons whose incomes are supplemented. According to a District Manager in Family and Social Services, the majority of employable persons are on assistance for less than 6 months. Case loads for the Hinton District (Hinton and Jasper) are reported in Figure 5.7. Most social assistance is administered to individuals residing in the Hinton area, at a ratio of around nine times that found in Jasper. This case-load disparity between Jasper and Hinton exists largely because of the Federal Parks Act stipulating that an individual must be employed to live within the boundaries of a National Park. This *need to reside* policy is discussed in section 5.4.1.

The clear trend in Figures 5.7 and 5.8 is toward lower welfare case loads. During 1995, there was an average of 165 cases at any given time. A single case represents an average family unit of 2.38 individuals, which translates into just over 24 individuals per thousand who rely upon FSS as their main source of income. The entire population of the Hinton FSS District is 16,000 so, based on case loads in 1995, three individuals required some form of assistance from FSS. Figure 5.8 illustrates the decline in dependence based on the number of individuals per 1,000 and compares Hinton District case loads with the province as a whole. After 1994, the provincial decline in case loads began to level off, while the Hinton District reported a continuing decline.

On the surface, these welfare statistics show a very positive situation. Fewer and fewer Foothills residents are relying on social assistance to meet their basic needs. According to the District Manager, the Hinton District has reported lower rates of welfare dependence than other regions of the province. As an indicator of poverty, these numbers might provide some cause for encouragement about improved employment opportunity for some of the least advantaged residents in the region. To interpret these statistics correctly, however, one must place them into a social and political context. Most notably, the period between 1992 and 1995 corresponds to a period of reduced spending on provincial social services programs and a general restructuring of welfare funding and eligibility. As a factor in reducing case loads, this policy shift, associated with a larger political process involving reduced government spending in numerous departments, likely explains much of what is observed in the figures above.

Furthermore, it is a common belief that low-income families are mobile and may seek support from other communities seen to be more supportive of those in need. Out-migration of this type makes it difficult to assess factors causing the

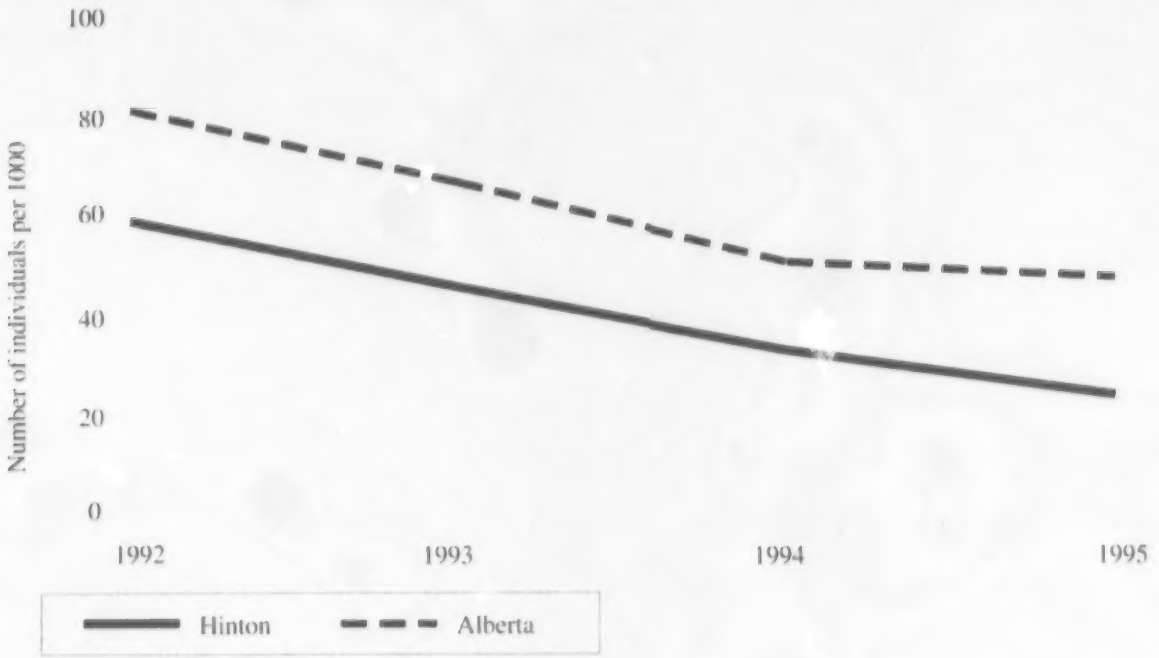

Figure 5.8 Average number of people who rely on Family & Social Service, 1992–1995.

decrease in case loads from 1992 to 1995. Interviews with residents can provide some insight into these phenomena unmeasured by the indicators depicted above. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 provide an assessment of poverty in the Foothills Model Forest by drawing upon perspectives from a wide range of residents.

5.5 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Poverty

According to the statistics on incidence of low income in Hinton, families with low income remained relatively constant at around 8%, while the proportion of unattached individuals with low income rose in 1996. Also, the statistics indicate that, compared with provincial averages, the proportion of residents with low income is relatively low. Caution must be taken, however, in drawing conclusions about low income and poverty from these data alone. Statistics Canada has a mandate to develop comparative information for the entire country and in developing methods for collecting comparative information, unique aspects of individual communities are necessarily overlooked. One such uniqueness in Hinton and Jasper is the comparatively high cost of living. Basic living costs, such as housing, are higher than in other communities of similar size, but when Statistics Canada determines a low income cut-off, it sets a single indiscriminate minimum income for all small urban regions in Canada. In 1995, this minimum income was $20,790 (Table 5.1) for a family of three in any urban center less than 30,000. As the definition states, families who earn less than this amount are likely to be in "strained" circumstances. Accordingly, some Hinton and Jasper residents may fail to qualify for low-income status because their incomes are above the cut-off. This does not mean, however, that families with average incomes slightly above the low income cut-off are not experiencing financial strain. If the high cost of living is considered, the incidence of low income likely underestimates the actual number of residents who are struggling at or below the low-income level.

Community perspectives on the extent of poverty in Hinton are mixed. Some statements mirror the low-income numbers reported in this document while others see disturbing signs of increased family stress in some segments of the population. The following discussion highlights polarized perspectives on poverty. Some residents see cause for concern while others note no poverty issues whatsoever. Comments are divided into three sections: who sees poverty, evidence of distress, and the occupational divide.

5.5.1 Who Sees Poverty?

One of the first things that strikes a reader of the interview data is not only what is being said about poverty but who is saying it. For a town of just 10,000 people, Hinton's residential districts are spread over a large area divided by the Yellowhead highway. The resulting landscape is characterized by geographic isolation, with high-end residential developments distanced from low-end residential developments by roads and undeveloped land. In the course of daily life, residents living "on the hill" need not visit "the valley" and residents in the valley need not visit the hill to carry out their activities. This geographic isolation may account for some of the apparent unawareness or lack of exposure to families from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. All communities experience some of this, but Hinton is more pronounced than others because of its geographic layout. Members of the community least likely to come across pockets of poverty are those in the higher income bracket who live in upper-middle-class neighborhoods and on acreages. An example of the kind of response received from people in these locations is as follows:

> ***Question:*** **Is poverty an issue here?**
> ***Answer:*** Oh I'm sure. I don't really see it but I know it does [exist]. ***Business Leader***
>
> ***Question:*** **Is there much real poverty or people on social assistance here?**
> ***Answer:*** Don't think so, not that I'm aware of. ***Forestry Employee***

In the first statement, the business leader acknowledges that poverty is an issue in Hinton but also states that it's not something he sees in his daily routine. In the second statement, the forestry employee says that he is unaware of any poverty conditions in Hinton. Either these residents are correct, and in fact there are very few economically distressed families and individuals in Hinton, or poverty in Hinton is concealed and/or isolated in some way. The physical geography of Hinton may prevent some residents from coming in contact with people from different economic backgrounds. Furthermore, in the absence of media attention or other methods of communicating poverty-related issues, poverty may be overlooked within Hinton's geographic landscape, resulting in the appearance of a more prosperous community than is actually the case.

Perspectives on poverty from individuals closely associated with low-income families are predictably different than those expressed in the statements above. Whether coming from people involved in Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) or Child Welfare, perspectives from the social services sector suggest more poverty-related issues than may be inferred from the relatively low rates of low income reported in the previous chapter. A couple of representative statements provide an alternative perspective on living conditions in Hinton:

> There is a very real subculture of people who are desperately struggling to make ends meet on fixed incomes. There is also .... It is not a lack of interest, I think it is a total lack of understanding, from people who have never had to struggle, of just what living with a low income really means. It is so much more than not having disposable dollars. It really does mean that you are marginalized. It means that you probably don't have the same access to getting to Edmonton to get bargains; to go to the Superstore, to go to Costco, to take advantage of the major sales. You have to struggle along with the prices in town. When we first came to town, I remember paying $35.00 for a whole season of hockey. You can barely buy one piece of equipment for that now. That is not just inflation, that is a lot of cut backs. ***Social Worker***
>
> ***Question:*** **Do you think there is a lot of poverty here in Hinton?**
> ***Answer:*** Yes, more than people realize. [Mentioned a single parent with a low income and two teenage children.] That is not much when you have to start buying school lunches and the whole bit. We have a lot of those people and then when they get jobs, they are only jobs that pay minimum wage. The most anyone pays here is $6.50 and that is after you have worked with them for 4 months. Most of them start at minimum wage, so most of them make just enough to get cut off assistance. So they have to pay for their own AHC (Alberta Health Care) and their own dental, you name it when you have kids. It is terrible, we are constantly helping people out. ***Metis Association Employee***

One comment from the social worker regarding the "total lack of understanding" should not go unnoticed. In order to understand the frustration of this social worker, one needs to understand some of the economic history of Hinton. As a resource-dependent community, the backbone of Hinton's economy was and arguably still remains mining and forestry.

Early migrants to Hinton came for jobs in the natural-resource sector. This economic activity has sustained the community and allowed it to prosper. But in recent years, other sectors of the economy have attracted new residents—most notably the service sector. Most of these new residents don't enjoy the benefits of high wages in the natural-resource sector but must face costs for housing and basic necessities priced for average income earners ($61,341[12]), wages well above the provincial average ($56,916) for 1996. When referring to this lack of understanding among residents, this social worker points out the divide between those who face little or no economic strain in the natural-resource sector and those residents whose lives are constrained by economic conditions. There is also a reference here to the relatively steady growth of Hinton's economy, where few long-term residents have struggled through lay-offs or a serious economic downturn. As a result, some prosperous residents may not have a sensitivity to issues of poverty. Combine this economic reality with geography and limited media attention, and one can begin to understand how local poverty concerns are shielded from the attention of many Hinton residents.

In addition to this economic divide, residents often mention how people in Hinton socialize around common off-time activities like hunting, skiing, or hockey. People become familiar with others in the community through these activities and a sense of community develops around them. For residents in strained economic circumstances, it is difficult to play an active part in community life because they can ill-afford the luxury of sports and leisure. Non-involvement and isolation between "haves" and "have-nots" further exacerbates strained circumstances because those in need are not connected adequately to informal support networks such as extended family (see Section 4.6.1 on Social Integration).

Another frequent observation from Hinton residents is that, more often than not, unemployed residents are likely to move to less expensive towns where social services are considered readily available. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the *move down the valley syndrome*. When life becomes too difficult in Jasper, people move down the valley to Hinton, and when life becomes unbearable in Hinton they move out of the valley all together. Arguably, the driving pressure here is the rising cost of living and the decline in middle-class employment. An expression of this syndrome provided here basically states that when people run out of work, they are wise to just move on to another community.

> They are [people on social assistance] certainly here, they may not be here in the same numbers. If I was on social assistance, I probably would move to Edmonton where you don't have a big spread, and also you might be able to find cheaper housing; then what I might get on social assistance would go further. So I think what happens is that we have some, but probably people would move because it would be easier to be someplace else. ***Community Leader***

What this kind of perspective often ignores, however, is the proportion of residents who come to Hinton hoping to find work in local industries. Until an opening becomes available, these residents are willing to work in low-paying jobs and may be very reluctant to just pick up and move during times of economic hardship. They will continue to work and support their families with low incomes while holding out hope for better employment in the future. Also, they may come from parts of Canada and beyond where jobs are even less plentiful than in Hinton. As a result, it is likely that many of these low-income or unemployed residents will not immediately move on to other communities even if cheaper living conditions and better social services can be found elsewhere. Most likely both dynamics are functioning in Hinton—some low income families and individuals hold out for the possibility of a higher paying job while others move elsewhere in search of better employment opportunities or social assistance programs.

5.5.2 *Evidence of Distress*

In section 5.3, we suggest that the incidence of a low-income indicator, on its own, may be an inadequate measure of poverty-related conditions. This is especially the case in Hinton where the cost of living is higher than in communities of similar size. Improvements in the measure of poverty are made possible by selecting local indicators that are specific to the community. Some of these alternative measures may derive from specific institutional activity at the local level. For instance, most communities have established local organizations to assist those who are in need. One of the most active of these organizations is the Food Bank. The actual number of people seeking services from the Food Bank, while not a direct measure of poverty, can indicate the level of economic stress among residents and supplement our understanding of poverty at the community level. The statements here suggest a very active Food Bank and Share Shop program.

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[12] The average income is a statistic generated from the income distribution. We can observe in Figure 5.1 that relatively few families actually report an average income around $61,341. Most families report incomes well below or well above the average value.

> If you go to the other end of the spectrum, if you go to the community Share Shop where people can go and get used items and that type of stuff, there's stuff coming into that place and coming out of that place on a continual basis and the Food Bank, like I say, they've got to the point where they're advertising trying to keep food on the shelves because they can't keep up with demand. The Boys and Girls Club closed down due to lack of support, or pardon me, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, yet they had a lengthy waiting list of children who needed that kind of encouragement in their life. So there are signs of a real discrepancy there. ***Resource Industry Employee***
>
> A lot of them [people in subsidized housing] are women on social assistance who find that the cheque just doesn't stretch far enough so it's a stop-gap thing. They come a week before the end of the month. Some are families on social assistance who can't make it. But there are also the working poor and I am seeing more and more of them. People who are holding down two or three part-time jobs and no benefits and that isn't enough to keep body and soul together so they come to the Food Bank. ***Clergy***

These comments provide some insight into the question of poverty and take our analysis of poverty in Hinton further than statistics on low income or welfare. Families show signs of distress by reaching out for assistance to feed their family or by seeking help for children who lack adequate family support. Others struggle financially as they juggle family obligations and two or three part-time jobs. Organizations existing within the community to provide for these people are an important source of information and they open important windows to understanding conditions of poverty and distress within the community.

Another indicator of distress in Hinton is the noticeable activities of youth. A number of interviewed residents mention the activities of kids, especially those from low-income families, and express concern about emerging patterns of inappropriate behavior. Whether these patterns are attributable to normal adolescent behavior or related to their socio-economic condition is unclear. What is clear, however, are the frequent comments made by residents regarding youth. Comments range from concerns about vandalism to home-schooled students who frequent certain parts of town during school hours.

> There is poverty in this community, just go behind that store some night and you'll see it yourself [referring to youth from low-income families hanging out in behind the store]. ***Mill Employee***
>
> There is a definite class system among the teenagers in this town. There are the teenagers that can afford their cars and their parties and the show and then there are kids who have absolutely nothing, they are the ones that are hanging out on the streets. ***Social Worker***

These comments give some sense of how poverty might manifest itself in a community like Hinton where there is a fairly prominent disparity between wealthy and poor families (see Chapter 4). Youth experience the direct consequences from strained financial circumstances differently than adults. They are often stigmatized by others and commonly find companionship among other youth from similar economic backgrounds. Kids from these families are faced with very different sets of opportunities, whether they are recreational or academic, and to the extent that families are in economic distress, youth behavior may serve as an important indicator of this divide.

There are likely other indicators of poverty at the local level that can demonstrate the dynamics of community life more accurately than low income and social assistance. Local service organizations such as the Food Bank and the Big Brothers and Sisters Organization can assist in providing a more balanced view of those in the low economic bracket, who these residents might be, and support systems available to assist families and individuals in their current circumstances.

5.5.3 *Occupational Divide*

The Hinton economy brings together a unique diversity of individual backgrounds, skills, and experience. Many people come to Hinton to work as millwrights, tour operators, and chamber maids, all hoping to find and participate in a vibrant community beautifully situated in the Rocky Mountain foothills. Some of these residents have stated that local employment and off-work opportunity is unmatched, while others have found it to be an uphill battle of minimum wages in a high-cost resource town. Because of the diversity of opportunity, the question of poverty in Hinton is not so much a question of the dichotomy between those who work and those who don't, but more so between the working wealthy and the working poor. As

in Jasper, the unemployment rate is relatively low and labor-force participation is relatively high, so the question of poverty is not often associated with work opportunity. The question of poverty is more strongly related to job quality and remuneration. Community perspectives on this issue are numerous and are reported in several sections of this document (see Sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). These sections, along with the perspectives expressed below, suggest an occupational divide that is quite noticeable.

> If you don't have a job in the mill or the mines, then you live in the trailer park and you don't have money for all these toys. Absolutely. ***Recreation Employee***
>
> ***Question:*** **Do you feel that there is a large percentage of the population that is faced with poverty here?**
> ***Answer:*** Yes.
> ***Question:*** **What types of people would those be, are they single-parent families...?**
> ***Answer:*** No, even dual-parent families, traditional families, yet they don't have one of the better paying jobs, it is really hard, very expensive. ***Social Worker***

We do not intend to imply here that a healthy community is simply one where everyone has an opportunity to live in a detached home and own two vehicles. Occupational and educational differences will always stratify a community. It is not our intention to rally against this reality, but to suggest that Hinton is a uniquely stratified community. In most parts of Canada, and especially in urban areas, relative poverty comes with unemployment. In Hinton, relative poverty comes less from unemployment—although unemployment will certainly factor strongly—and more from occupation. As a result, the relative availability of low-paying jobs may be closely associated with the measure of low income and strained economic circumstances in Hinton.

5.6 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Poverty

In Jasper, the occupational divide plays a less significant role than it does in Hinton. Although some Jasper residents work for CN or Alberta utility companies, most residents find employment in tourism and recreation. Most residents of Jasper are either owners, managers, or employees in the service industry. Jasper resembles Hinton, however, in the relatively high cost of living. Food is costly and housing is in very short supply, making basic living costs a large part of monthly expenses for the average resident. As in Hinton, the arbitrary low-income cut-off set for Jasper by Statistics Canada is arguably too low to accurately measure the proportion of residents facing strained economic circumstances. Like Hinton, there are numerous statements from residents expressing the economic strain placed on families faced with rising costs for basic necessities.

> A lot of the families right now are hanging on by a thread. Basically it has become very expensive in the past few years, so things are going to be more expensive yet. With the decline in business and the splitting up of the same pie into smaller units, a lot of people are going to have less income and have to pay more money. People have to work two jobs and the season is just too short to sustain....I know some guys who are making between $10 and $13 an hour. They find it already very hard. Next to the railroad workers, those are some of the better paid people in town. They are basically finding it tough. So it doesn't take them very long to decide that if they are just going in the hole to live here, then they can't continue. ***Restaurant Owner***

Increasing monthly expenses are a serious concern for many residents on fixed incomes. The most vulnerable of these are unattached individuals, single parents, seniors, and youth. The family characteristic profile in Section 4.5 shows that approximately 50% of the Jasper population is either living as a single person or a single parent. Many of these single residents live in shared accommodations, but they remain more vulnerable to the effects of lay-offs or low wages than do those in married or common-law arrangements. Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) acknowledges this growing segment of the population, which they characterize as: low-wage earners, renters, working more than one job, little time for volunteer and recreational activities, no employment benefits, and no road-worthy vehicle (FCSS, 1997).

Although we observed considerable strain among a growing proportion of permanent residents, the segment of the Jasper population most exposed to conditions of poverty is that of the seasonal workers. Few deny the marginal economic conditions under which they live and a number of concerned residents (led by FCSS) are taking up some of the issues arising from these conditions. Comments are organized into two sections: the need to reside, and periods and places of poverty.

F-2

5.6.1 The Need to Reside

One of the unique conditions placed on Jasper residents, as a town situated within a National Park, is that residents are required by the Federal Parks Act to be employed if they are living within the Park boundary. This *need to reside* policy protects the town and the Park by restricting in-migration to those who are either operating or employed in a sanctioned business enterprise. Retirees and long-term residents are allowed to maintain residence but those wishing to build a summer home or live on investment income are technically banned from residence. As the requirement for residence is based on employment, some people conclude that legislation restricts the extent of poverty in Jasper.

> There are not very many people here who are unemployed because of the need to reside clause. You can't come to Jasper on unemployment insurance because you can't afford to live. ***Educator***

Not only would it be difficult to live on employment insurance in Jasper, social services are reluctant to assist the unemployed because of the need-to-reside policy. The general attitude among most residents is summed up as: "If you are out of work then you should just move on."

Jasper is a unique community and exists to serve a specific function—to provide services to those who visit the Park. A by-product of this generally accepted town mandate is the perspective that caring for disadvantaged residents is arguably less of concern in Jasper than in other communities. An employee of Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) comments on this perspective.

> Social services don't get a warm fuzzy feeling about helping people out in Jasper. They would rather they move into another community because it is expensive to live here. They don't want to be giving the message that you can live in a resort community and collect social assistance. ***Social Services Employee***

Although legislation curbs the incidence of low income due to unemployment, it does not, however, eliminate the phenomenon of "the working poor." Indeed, Jasper's economy is uniquely structured, with significant seasonal and low-wage work, to exacerbate the problem of the working poor. Such conditions are most noticeable in specific parts of town and during specific periods of time.

5.6.2 Periods and Places of Poverty

Historically, one of the most desperate times of the year for the service-sector employee is in the Fall season between early October and late December. Summer-time jobs are terminated at the end of the summer tourist season and seasonal workers attempt to sustain themselves until the winter ski season opens. During one such season, sufficient snow to open the ski facilities did not fall until close to Christmas. The result was an extended period of unemployment for many workers and greater than normal financial strain. The hardship experienced by seasonal employees during that time was the catalyst for a Food Bank initiative:

> So it hit Christmas time and there still wasn't any snow and nobody was getting a pay check. And so at that point we didn't have a food bank but people began to be aware that this was going on and the town got together and organized some of the food. They cooked them up in food hampers down at [name of local apartment complex] and distributed them. Shortly thereafter we put together the Food Bank. That was the catalyst. ***Community Leader***
>
> Our Food Bank usage is highest around November, December, January. People are working until mid-October and that is when the layoffs really start to come. Then you have a period before the ski hill opens and then it opens and people don't get paid for a couple of weeks. There is a higher Food Bank usage. That drops down a little bit until April when people have been laid off from the ski hill and are waiting for the other jobs to come about. Santas Anonymous looks after 20-25 families every winter with gifts and food hampers. ***Social Services Employee***

As in Hinton, the local service organizations like the Food Bank can serve as important indicators of strained financial circumstances. In Jasper, where few seasonal residents are included in the socio-economic profile generated by Statistics Canada, these local-level indicators become even more important in assessing condition of relative poverty within the community.

Another aspect of seasonal employment in Jasper is high housing costs. In order to compensate for high costs, seasonal employees save money by rooming with other employees in residences often provided by the employer or in apartment units specifically built to house seasonal employees. Some of these houses, locally termed *flop houses*, are located in residential areas of Jasper and cause much concern about health and fire conditions, vandalism, and late-night noise.

> I touched base with the public health inspector to see what's happening. We're getting reports of 30 to 40 staff in houses that should not have any more then 6 or 7. All kinds of things like subdivisions with chipboard in living rooms, people living in closets. Fire regulations and safety are of real concern. That's one of the main things. Of course these things lead to health problems. The other thing is no protection. Any employee under 3 months can be fired on the spot because your employer doesn't like the look of you one day. There's high turnover. We see employers scheduling staff in, and when they get there it's not busy enough so they send them home and don't pay them. Because a lot of these people are from other provinces they aren't familiar with labor standards. They either get so frustrated they leave and don't bother to find support and that's their impression of Jasper. ***Employment Officer***

Poverty is evident among seasonal and permanent employees in Jasper, especially during particular periods of the year when jobs are scarce. This aspect of economic life in Jasper is consistent throughout its history. Since the early days of Jasper, when Jasper Park Lodge was one of the only major employers, employees came to Jasper to work, endured difficult conditions, enjoyed the beautiful environment, and then returned home. Season after season, the cycle repeats itself.

Some residents express concern that the working and living conditions of seasonal employees is declining due to increasing competition in the service sector and increasing housing costs. Even more, signs of strain among seasonal employees are more evident than in years past. As an indicator of poverty, the incidence of low income used by Statistics Canada to assess families and individuals in strained circumstances is a starting point. Poverty, as described by residents themselves, can supplement this information and facilitate poverty measures as valuable indicators of community well-being.

5.7 Discussion

In Section 5.5, census data provides some interesting summary information on the incidence of low income in the Foothills Model Forest. Most notable statistics include a large gap in low-income rates between economic families and unattached individuals. Depending on the jurisdiction, 25 to 40% of unattached individuals find themselves in strained economic circumstances. At the same time, unlike Edmonton and provincial averages, the incidence of low income for economic families is generally steady or lower in the Model Forest area. Although the incidence of low income is based on low-income cut-offs, we argue that these values may in fact be too low for Hinton and Jasper considering the relatively high cost of living in these communities.

Representative statements from Hinton portray a relationship between the local town geography and the relatively hidden nature of poverty. Furthermore, residents suggest that poverty is more related to low-income employment than local unemployment. In addition to statistics from census data, other local indicators can be employed as measures of poverty. These indicators may measure organizational activity, such as the Food Bank, that assist families and individuals in strained economic circumstances. In Jasper, some residents believe that the *need to reside* clause in the Federal Parks Act diminished the extent of poverty in their community. Residents who are unemployed would not be allowed to remain in Jasper on social assistance and would thus be *pushed down the valley* to Hinton or places beyond. Other residents acknowledge the highly cyclical nature of poverty in their community where reduced tourism activity during the *shoulder seasons* places many year-round residents in strained economic circumstances. It is likely that both Hinton and Jasper export their poor to either larger urban centers or less expensive rural locales. The high migration rates for these communities shown in Chapter 2 lend support to this assertion. Although lower wage employment in the service sector will likely mean poverty will remain a structural feature in both local economies, our secondary and primary data both suggest that a significant proportion of the working poor cycle through these communities.

In comparison with Edmonton and provincial averages, a lower proportion of Foothills Model Forest families and unattached individuals experience low income. The only discrepancy in this generalization is the incidence of low income for unattached individuals in Hinton and Jasper, where the proportion of low income has moved closer to provincial averages. Narrative data opens a small window on poverty in these communities and provides insight into strained economic circumstances for

many local residents. Often the first step toward addressing poverty is acknowledging that it exists and creating some community concern and support for the specific local circumstances that may contribute to the problem. The data presented in this document may serve as a useful vehicle toward this end.

5.8 Appendix

5.8.1 Hinton: Additional Local Perspectives on Poverty

Well, what I can tell, it's a lot of probably lower income kids. They have nothing else to do and that's their playground almost. The sidewalks and the empty parking lots. And that's the only time we hear about it, if the customers are offended by being confronted that way. ***Business Owner***

I'm not saying that we don't have any here cause I know we do, I know of people who are on it (social assistance). It's a concern of mine. I don't think you punish those that make a lot of money but somehow the needs of those others should be satisfied if possible within the community. ***Community Leader***

Well yeah, the case loads are down for sure and the people that are left on the case loads have a lot of barriers. They have a lot of issues that need to be dealt with before or if they are ever ready to go back to work. ***Social Worker***

It would be nice to see the whole economy move back so that you could live on five dollars an hour. You see a lot of waitresses and minimum wage, but still, you can't make a living...especially if you've got kids. ***Logger.***

I don't see much poverty but I presume there is some. My guess would be you've got, at the high end, you've got the resource industry people and at the low end you've got people that work in the service and tourism industries. But in terms of poverty we don't, I haven't observed much. ***Forestry Worker***

He feels that there is no real poverty in the community. He mentioned that the natives are generally employed[15]. "It is quite difficult to live in Hinton if you are poor." ***Businessman***

5.8.2 Jasper: Additional Local Perspectives on Poverty

The people that will be able to afford living here 5 or 6 years from now are going to be those people who have no dependents, no payments, you just come and work, you are carefree. Make a good dollar by working hard, share accommodation with someone else. ***Social Services Employee***

M: Is there poverty in Jasper?
N: Oh yeah.
B: Definitely. At Christmas time the Food Bank was really utilized more than it's ever been in the past.
M: Who are the poor people here?
N: Unemployment is really high here. Go over to the employment office. It's always really busy. What you see a lot of, especially at this time of year, is people having two or three jobs to make it here. You do it just to save money, otherwise you don't really save anything.
M: Then why do people stay here?
B: I think there's different reasons. I think everyone comes here for the environment, for the scenery of course, the mountains and all that stuff. ***Two Social Services Employees***

The low minimum wage is a problem. A lot of these kids work two or three jobs for the summer to go home with any kind of money. The cost of living here is very expensive. ***Employment Officer***

[15] Arial font denotes paraphrased comments.

The young people who come in, like this staff house here, it's like having a black hole in the street. And we'd like to be friendly to them but there is a lot of changeover. Salaries are so low they don't stay long, they move in and out....I was downtown this morning and a young man had his mattress out on a bench with his backpack sound asleep. There is usually someone sleeping in a shelter place near the hospital. When people come here to Jasper it's sort of the end of the line. You don't go to Valemont. You get this far and....it's very costly to travel now. ***Senior Citizen***

She thought that there was more poverty in the community in the last couple of years. Transients (especially Easterners) come to Jasper with no money, expecting to get a job and they get here and there is no work and no place for them to stay so they sleep in vacant garages or on the patch in the middle of town. Sometimes they will have kids coming to the hospital dehydrated and malnourished because they are run down and are partying a lot and are not eating properly.[14] ***Nurse***

Then there is the other group, where we have a lot of kids who come to work in the hospitality industry and they are often underemployed and low wage and some of them aren't finished high school and some of them are young mothers and I think they are below the poverty level and are living in crowded conditions and I think a lot of that faction spends a lot of time at Pete's Bar. ***Educator***

I know of some of the staff that didn't have housing of any kind and they had to live in the campground all summer long or find a garage or find someplace in a dirky little dark basement where you feel that if there is a fire I don't want to be here. So these situations exist and they concern me a bit from a social point of view. ***Child Care Worker***

It is very difficult. I think often the Jasper population does not, might not really have the insight in how poor people can get here in town. The cost of living is extremely high, the food and any kind of supplies you might need are extremely high and not everybody has a car to drive out of town to get something cheaper. I know that there are many single people using the Food Bank. Many do not want to use the Food Bank because it is a small town and they do not want to be known as being in need. I know that for instance here we occasionally help people who were in need, who did not feed themselves so that their children had something to eat. That still exists in something that is perceived as the rich Jasper. Which actually it isn't. ***Child Care Worker***

Question: Do the higher income families know about the poverty in Jasper or the problems that are going on with the seasonal worker or do they kind of remove themselves from that aspect of Jasper?
Answer: I think some do know and I think many do really care. Jasper people generally, as I saw them, worked with them, care about social issues. They are very involved and I think the volunteer involvement in many organizations is unlike any other I have seen in other communities. I think people in Jasper generally care about the community very much. ***Child Care Worker***

Jasper's getting to be a pretty hard place to be if you're young. There's a lot of tension and pressure on you. It's tough to make a living here. Myself for example, I am a single mother with a seasonal job. It's very marginal. ***Artist***

Most of the young people are living in very crowded and poor accommodation. The really susceptible ones are those who can't take control of their own destiny. They aren't strong enough to stand up to those pressures they face here. People find themselves doing things they normally never would have guessed they would. ***Social Services Employee***

I think it's more sympathy than anything else. The fact that they work for almost nothing, they live in closets. And they are not taken care of very well by the people who ought to be taking care of them. It will be interesting to see if this trend we see of people living in vans and on the streets, if that will change the perception, because they're not so much hidden away in a closet some where. ***Senior Citizen***

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[14] Arial font denotes paraphrased comments.

5.8.3 Census Tables

Table 5.2 Incidence of low income, by family and individual, 1981-1996

Census Divisions	Incidence of low income (proportion of population)							
	1996		1991		1986		1981	
	economic families	unattached individuals	economic families	unattached individuals	economic families	unattached individuals	economic families	unattached individuals
Hinton	8.3	23.4	7.7	16.6	9.8	18.1	7.7	18.1
Yellowhead	12.3	23.8	11.9	24.1	16.1	33.7	14.1	30.8
Jasper	5.1	36.5	6.0	20.3	7.0	24.5	4.0	30.5
Foothills	9.3	25.9	9.07	20.92	11.81	25.46	9.6	25.38
Edson	15.4	30	11.4	20.9	10.9	27.6	7.2	28.2
Grande Cache	10.3	19.4	5.4	25.5	7.2	7.8	9.9	20.2
Whitecourt	11.1	27.9	8.9	19.8	16.6	26.6	10.2	28.4
Edmonton	21.3	46.8	19.3	41.2	16.5	38.3	11.9	32.2
Alberta	14.9	39.2	13.9	35.5	13.8	32.2	10.7	30.5
Canada	16.3	42.2	13.2	36.5	14.3	38.0	13.0	38.5

Table 5.3 Incidence of low income, by family and individual, 1996

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	Yellowhead	Jasper
All economic families	7,784,865	715,390	2,795	2,615	930
Low-income economic families	1,267,205	106,605	230	320	45
Incidence of low income (%)	16.3	14.9	8.3	12.3	5.1
All unattached individuals	3,594,510	331,050	840	770	1,060
Low-income unattached individuals	1,511,570	129,790	195	185	385
Incidence of low income (%)	42.2	39.2	23.4	23.8	36.5
Total pop. in private households	28,011,350	2,612,235	9,935	9,320	3,925
Persons in low-income family units	5,514,190	157,985	955	1,265	525
Incidence of low income (%)	19.7	26	9.6	13.6	13.4

Table 5.4 Incidence of low income, by family and individual, 1986

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH 94	ID 12
All economic families	6,761,520	622,025	2,325	2,180	875
Low-income economic families	965,465	85,670	230	355	60
Incidence of low income (%)	14.3	13.8	9.8	16.1	7
All unattached individuals	2,684,455	270,765	685	635	900
Low-income unattached individuals	1,020,940	87,135	125	215	220
Incidence of low income (%)	38	32.2	18.1	33.7	24.5
Total population in private households	24,496,670	2,288,210	8,545	8,130	3,460
Persons in low-income family units	4,161,840	376,970	865	1,635	390
Incidence of low income (%)	17	16.5	10.1	20.1	11.2

Table 5.5 Incidence of low income, by family and individual, 1981

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	YH 94	ID 12
All economic families	6,345,690	571,675	2,170	2,305	780
Low-income economic families	825,680	61,350	165	325	30
Incidence of low income (%)	13	10.7	7.7	14.1	4
All unattached individuals	2,355,290	258,580	640	790	825
Low-income unattached individuals	906,960	78,945	115	245	250
Incidence of low income (%)	38.5	30.5	18.1	30.8	30.5

Chapter 6.
HUMAN CAPITAL

6.1 Objective

To describe levels of human capital in the Foothills Model Forest and to compare these levels to provincial and national levels. Secondary data are used to describe human capital conditions in three census subdivisions in the Foothills Model Forest. Additional insights are provided through an analysis and discussion of primary interview data gathered in the region.

6.2 Rationale

Communities with well-educated residents, who possess diverse skills and entrepreneurial capacity, are better able to adapt to changing labor-market conditions. These attributes are all aspects of human capital. Low human capital communities, those that lack leadership, have low educational attainment levels, and either poor skills or very specialized skills, will have greater difficulty making adjustments to global, national, or regional economic changes.

6.3 The Relationship Between Human Capital and Community Sustainability

6.3.1 *Defining Human Capital*

Human capital refers to "the productive investment of resources in human beings rather than in plants and machinery."(Jary and Jary, 1991: 217). At the level of the individual, human capital refers to the collective skills and capabilities that an individual possesses. This is a difficult concept to quantify in meaningful and measurable terms as human capital encompasses elements of human productivity as divergent as creativity, entrepreneurial ability, education, specialized skills, and training. Economists generally assume a fairly direct relationship between investment in human capital and returns on such investments. Human capital investment generally entails foregoing current consumption. For example, university training or certificate programs may require taking out student loans, or accepting a lower standard of living for the period of training, than if one entered the labor market directly after high school. An individual who makes a human capital investment is assumed to be looking toward future benefits including financial rewards, but also personal enrichment and a lifestyle defined in terms of life-long learning.

In this study, we are interested in communities as the unit of analysis. There is an assumed link between a community's human capital and its long-term sustainability. Communities marked by high levels of human capital development are likely better equipped to adapt to changing global conditions and more capable of maintaining a competitive advantage over communities with low levels of human capital. High human capital communities have higher levels of entrepreneurship and greater transferability of skills to emerging economic sectors. Low human capital communities are vulnerable to changing macroeconomic conditions brought about by global competition, economic downturns, and obsolescence. Lower human capital levels or narrowly specialized skills may inhibit the pace at which communities may adapt to changing market conditions and opportunity. As noted by several authors, adaptability is the key to sustainability for communities (Beckley 1995; Doak and Kusel 1996).

6.3.2 *Previous Research on Human Capital in Resource-Dependent Communities*

Human capital theory and human capital investment decisions are generally related to the individual unit of analysis. Johnson and Stallman (1994) suggest that a number of significant attitudinal factors affect an individual's decision to invest or not invest in their own human capital development. Among these factors are: attitudes towards one's community and community attachment (willingness or unwillingness to move away), attitudes toward the community's traditional

occupations (farming, mining, logging, manufacturing), aversion to risk, and views on education and educated people in general. Johnson and Stallman (1994: 225) point out that, although individuals may have sufficient understanding of the value of education (*e.g.*, the potential rewards from or returns on investing in their own human capital), negative attitudes toward educated people or educational institutions may lead them to choose not to develop their own human capital through continuing formal education.

Several factors account for historically low levels of human capital in resource-dependent communities. First, most jobs in the natural resource industries have had low human capital requirements. Particular pieces of machinery, either in the forest, in the mines, or in processing facilities require specialized training to operate, but do not require technical degrees or a college education. Indeed, many older workers in natural resource sectors today have a high school education or less. Much of the training required for mine, mill, and forest harvesting was received on the job. As a result of historically low human capital requirements in the dominant industry, many people who live in resource-dependent communities see little incentive to invest time or money in continuing education. In most resource towns, a significant proportion of professional and technically trained persons—teachers, health care workers, social service workers, and government employees—earn less income than production workers at the local mill, truck drivers, or workers on extraction crews. Particularly if young people are interested in remaining in the local area, it may be *irrational* to spend much time or effort on continuing education. There is much less literature on labor market dynamics in tourism-dependent communities. However, similar structural conditions exist that promote rational underinvestment in human capital. If youths wish to remain in the community in which they were raised, and there are few jobs that require skilled or highly educated employees, there is a major disincentive to invest in one's own education and training. Rational underinvestment in human capital is cited in a number of studies as a leading cause of poverty in resource-dependent places (Humphrey *et al.* 1993; Freudenburg 1992; Johnson and Stallman 1994).

6.3.3 *Overadaptation to Resource Sectors*

Freudenburg (1992) and Freudenburg and Gramling (1994) elaborate on this issue of rational underinvestment in human capital. They also claim that people may rationally *overinvest* in human capital. By this they mean that some individuals may invest significantly in specialized skills acquisition due to the potential of high returns. Unfortunately, in many contexts, those highly specialized skills are not transferable to other sectors and, therefore, this type of human capital does not serve those who invest in it during economic downturns. The example that they give is of argon welders in the Louisiana petroleum industry. This is very lucrative work, when one can get it. But when one cannot, there are few other places available to practise one's skills. Freudenburg (1992) refers to rational under- and overinvestment in human capital as *overadaptation*. When a local labor force is characterized by low education levels and very specialized skills, it may well be overadapted to a particular sector or industry. If the skills of millwrights, wood workers, and machine operators employed by a local pulp mill are highly specialized and not transferable to other sectors, and these types of occupations make up a significant proportion of the local labor force in Hinton, the community may be overadapted and, therefore, vulnerable. Freudenburg (1992) claims that over-adaptation may be reinforced if workers learn at a young age that financial success depends more on who you know than what you know. Again, in tourism-dependent places, the problems of human capital underinvestment are more due to the low-skilled labor requirements of the service sector versus highly specialized skills required in some resource sectors.

Given these market pressures and prevailing negative attitudes toward education in many rural areas, it is not surprising that human capital in resource-dependent communities is low. Oftentimes there are no champions of human capital development in such communities. Large corporate players in the resource sectors lobby local political bodies to keep taxes low (thereby undermining educational quality in the local public school system). Nor are unions great supporters of human capital development (Johnson and Stallman 1994): they reward their members through seniority and not for skill development or continuing investment in human capital. In many resource-dependent communities, these two institutional players are the dominant influences in local tax policy and town spending (Beckley 1996). It is not surprising, then, to find elaborate sports facilities (reflective of high community priorities placed on recreation) and well-funded fire departments (to protect significant corporate investments in processing facilities) and sub-standard educational facilities in resource-dependent towns.

In tourism-dependent communities a similar phenomenon may occur. Many tourism-dependent places attract young, unattached individuals and/or retirees. Neither of these populations are likely to have school-aged children and they are, therefore, not likely to support high local taxes, a large portion of which usually go toward local public education. If enough

amenity or equity in-migrants move to an area and successfully lobby for property tax reduction, there may be serious implications for future human capital development in the community.

6.3.4 Human Capital Development and Economic Diversification: Which Comes First?

Another problem that may plague resource-dependent communities is the inability of individuals with high human capital to find a niche in the local economy. By definition, resource-dependent communities are specialized in sectors that rely on low-skilled labor. People who wish to remain in the community, or return to the community after a period away developing their human capital, may find it difficult to use their formal educational training locally. The results are that human capital may be drained away from resource communities during periods of out-migration, or young people who migrate for advanced education may not return (Krannich and Luloff 1991).

Recent rationalization and decentralization of health care services, social services, and other provincial government services mean that there are fewer opportunities for highly educated doctors, nurses, public administrators, and social workers to practise their professions in rural and remote locales such as Hinton and Jasper. The difficulty in fitting highly educated or highly skilled individuals into productive occupations in resource communities remains a significant challenge for community leaders and community development professionals in those places. If there are no jobs, human capital development will go unrewarded at the individual level, and those individuals who do invest in their human capital will have to leave to find work in their chosen fields. On the other hand, if the local economy diversifies and matures faster than human capital develops in the community, new opportunities in professional or highly skilled occupations will go to non-residents who migrate into the community for those jobs. Places with overadapted labor markets may also face special challenges in trying to attract new businesses that could diversify the local economy. People who earn high wages with low human capital investment see little value in attracting businesses that require significantly more education and training but provide similar or lower financial returns. This lack of support for economic diversification may persist even during periods when resource sectors are losing employment through corporate rationalization and substitution of labor with capital.

Although much of the literature claims that resource-dependent communities are in a state of over-adaptation, this situation is not true for all communities. Natural resource industries today are characterized by high exposure to competitive international markets that necessitate highly automated environments and a skilled workforce. The Foothills region exhibits some of these market characteristics with coal mines that sell product to Japan, a pulp mill that competes for the lucrative North American market, and a recreation industry dependent on international travelers. To maintain a competitive edge, the workforce must be well trained and function in complex and changing work environments. From a human capital perspective, however, heavy industries in the Foothills region ship large volumes of raw materials to national and international centers and skill requirements for value-added production are generally higher than those required in primary industries.

Levels of human capital, the imagination of community leaders, the ability to access information, and the availability of a flexible, diverse resource base are variables that create the conditions for adaptable communities. Sustainable communities are those that can create opportunities from crises, that can take advantage of changing local and global economic conditions, and that have the vision to see beyond the immediate socio-economic reality. Human capital development facilitates these essential community characteristics and creates a flexible and adaptable workforce. In the end, places that have the flexibility to shift resources (human and financial) into emerging profit centers, will thrive.

6.4 Educational Attainment as a Proxy for Human Capital

Human capital is defined as skills, capacity, entrepreneurship, creativity, and general know-how acquired through education and training that increase individual productivity. Some of these characteristics or attributes of human capital are very difficult to measure and researchers often use educational attainment as a suitable proxy. All dimensions of human capital are not adequately covered by measures of educational attainment, but the concepts are closely linked and they provide a sufficient basis for analysis at the community level. We will use the same approach in this report by measuring educational attainment within the Foothills Model Forest. In addition, data collected from interviews with local residents will address, in part, the broad concept of human capital and provide a more complete understanding of human capital as it relates to sustainable development.

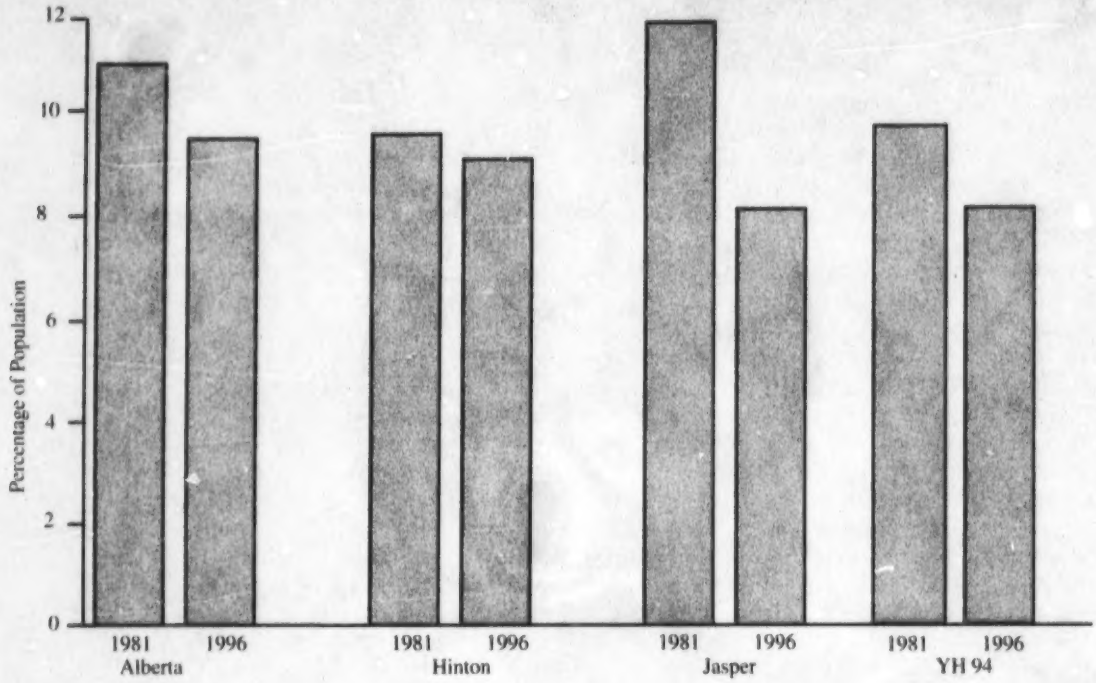

Figure 6.1 Change in full-time school attendance for those 15+, 1981–1996.

6.5 Measures of Educational Attainment

The categories chosen to represent educational attainment in Figure 6.1[15] require a brief explanation. Each category includes individuals who fall within a range of achievement defined by the category title. For instance, the category *some university* includes those who have a university degree as well as those who have attended some university but do not hold a degree. Figure 6.1 shows that more than 60% of YH94 (rural Foothills) over 15 years of age are educated to the high school level. This mean less than 40% of the population has some university or some post-secondary education. In contrast, more than 60% of Jasper's population has some university or some post-secondary training. Within the Foothills region, Jasper has the highest education levels while Hinton has lower university attendance than Edmonton, provincial, or national jurisdictions. Hinton makes up some ground with trade and diploma certificates that are part of the post-secondary category. On the whole, residents in the Model Forest area have lower levels of education than the provincial average.

Figure 6.2 shows change in school attendance from 1981 to 1996. In 1981, approximately 11% of Alberta's population was in school full time. For most reported jurisdictions, this number has not changed much since then and only Jasper records a noticeable drop in full-time attendance from around 12% in 1981 to 8% in 1991. Figures 6.3 and 6.4 provide more specific information on changing educational attainment in the Foothills Model Forest.

Although Figure 6.2 shows little change in full-time school attendance between 1981 and 1996, Figure 6.3 suggests that more residents in Hinton are achieving higher levels of education. The shaded areas of each pie (some post-secondary and some university) indicate nearly half the population achieving some form of post-secondary education, up from 40% in 1981. Most gains are made in the *some post-secondary* category where trade and diploma programs are counted. In

[15] Unless otherise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada, Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B, Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1993, 1991, 1986, 1981. Census of Canada.

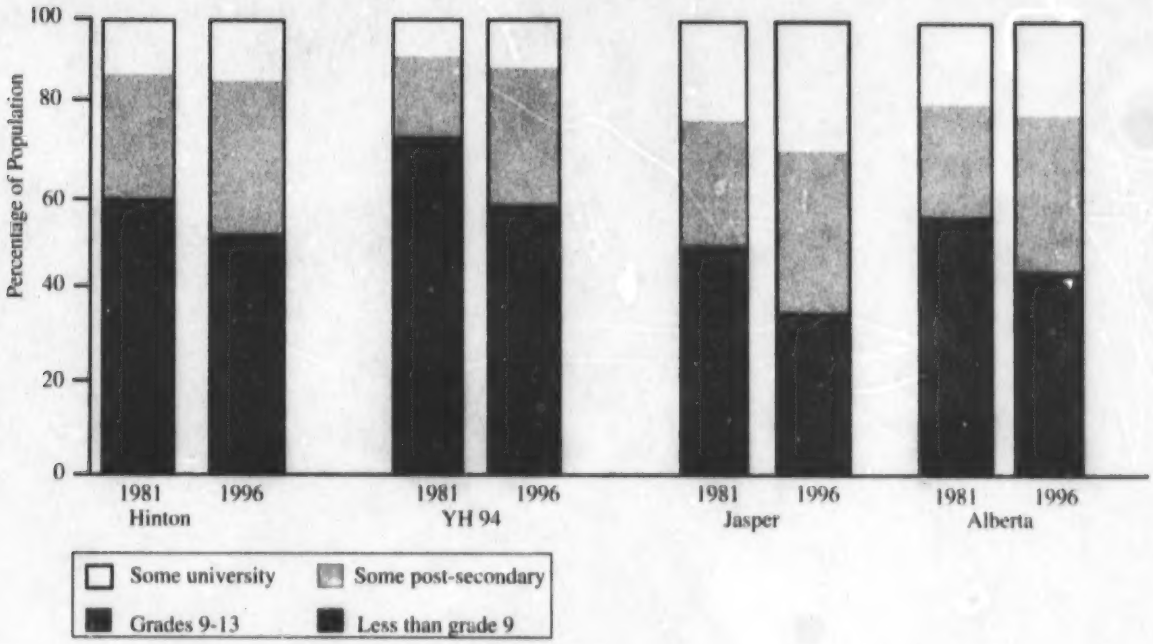

Figure 6.2 *Change in educational attainment, 1981-1996.*

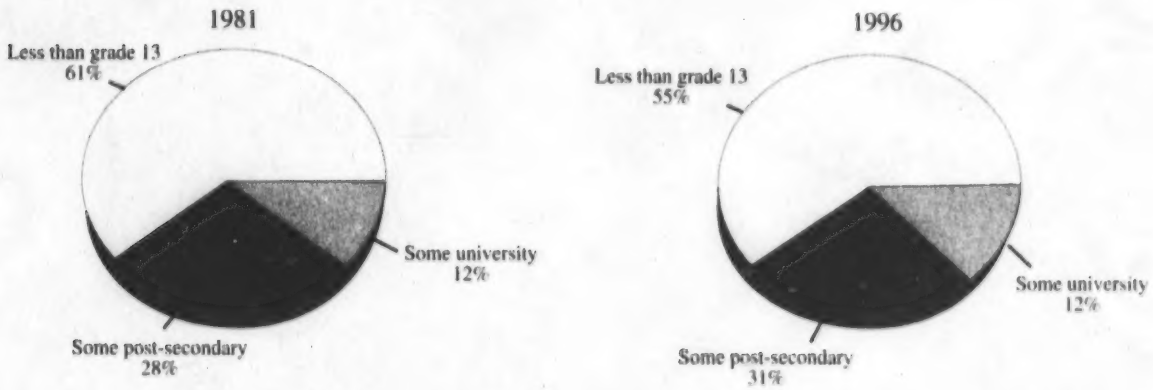

Figure 6.3 *Change in educational attainment, Hinton 1981–1996.*

contrast, students in Jasper (Figure 6.4) have not taken a similar path. There was a significant increase in the number of individuals pursuing post-secondary education in Jasper between 1981 and 1996. Attainment at the high school level was 37% in 1996, compared with 51% in 1981. The 14% difference is wholly accounted for by the 7% increase in those categories of some post-secondary education, and the 7% increase in those with some university. Essentially, these figures show opposite trends for Hinton and Jasper, with more students in Hinton achieving some post-secondary education and fewer students in Jasper completing more than the secondary school level. We will discuss some factors contributing to these trends later in the report.

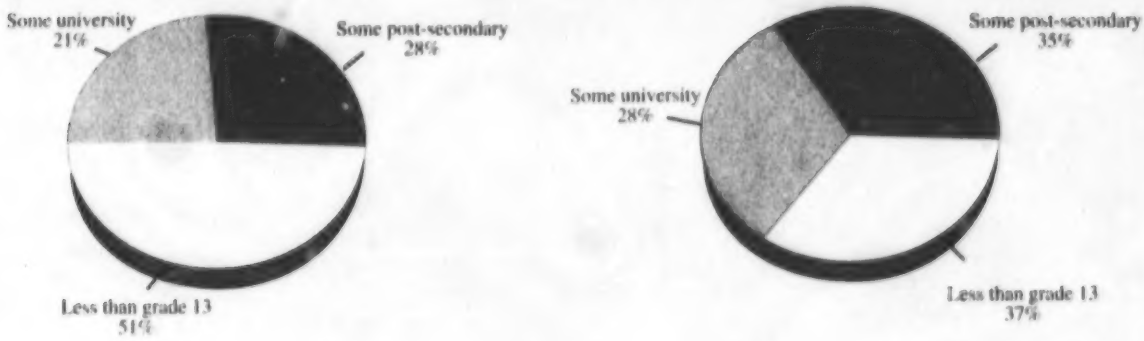

Figure 6.4 Change in educational attainment, Jasper 1981–1996.

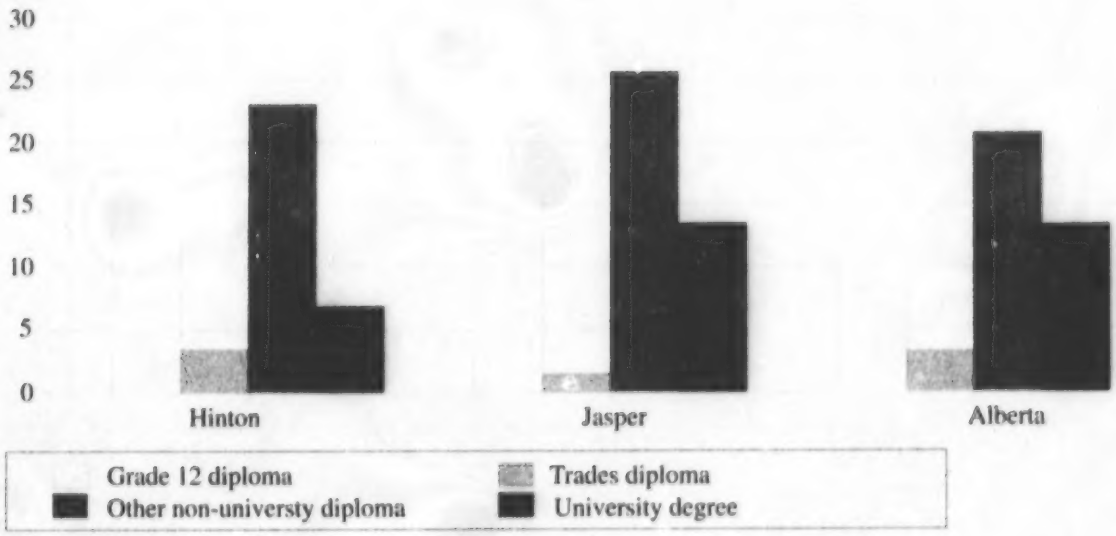

Figure 6.5 Highest level of education as a percent of total population 15+, 1996.

Figure 6.5 represents slightly different information than Figure 6.1. Instead of showing the percentage that falls within a range of educational achievement (*i.e.*, some university grouped with university degree holders), this figure shows only diploma and degree holders. Again, Hinton has the highest number of non-university diploma holders. This category includes residents who hold any kind of diploma from a non-degree-granting institution. Graduates from the *Environmental Training Centre* (ETC) in Hinton fall under this category. Jasper shows a smaller number of residents with non-university diplomas but more residents with trade diplomas and university degrees. Hinton lags well behind the provincial average when it comes to university degrees, while Jasper is on par with the rest of the province. This information is useful when considering the scope of educational attainment at the community level. Figure 6.5 provides some interesting information regarding different levels of specialized skills in the trades and non-degree categories compared with general educational attainment at the university level and will feed into a later discussion about general education and technical education as two distinct dimensions of human capital.

6.6 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Education

The census data indicate a trend toward increasing educational attainment in Hinton. More people are attending school and they are staying in school longer. This trend is not surprising given the increase in school attendance across Alberta and Canada as a whole. Jobs that pay well are often more difficult to find in the 1990s and people need more education than ever just to gain entry-level positions. Students realize this fact and are staying in school longer with expectations of higher earnings in the future. Community perspectives from Hinton are organized into five themes: community immunity, rising minimum requirements, out of school and on the job, past or present reality, and education as a proxy revisited.

6.6.1 *Community Immunity*

One interesting aspect about the Hinton economy, compared with other resource-dependent communities in Canada, is the local diversity of primary resource industries and the growing recreation and retail sectors. Hinton's current economic diversity is largely due to some fairly dramatic population redistributions in recent history. Some communities have essentially gone "bust" and either disappeared altogether (Mountain Park) or seen their populations dramatically reduced (Cadomin). Meanwhile, the last several decades of economic activity in several resource sectors has come to be concentrated in Hinton. This has diversified Hinton's employment base and led to considerable stability and prosperity. In conversation, Hinton residents often mention these positive economic changes in the context of uneven development in the modern economy.

> I sometimes think we live in a bubble. People have very unrealistic expectations, especially young people who have gone to school here. Their parents worked at the mill and they get a job with the mill. They don't realize that the life they live is not reality. It may be their reality but is it very, very unusual. ***Clergy***

Despite sustained economic prosperity, positive economic conditions have not always favored human capital development. In previous decades, primary industry employers required little in terms of formal education and many local residents found jobs straight out of grade school. In some cases, students deserted school for the job market even before receiving a high school diploma. After generations of this anomalous economic situation, many Hinton residents have come to expect accessible and continuous employment. As a result, higher education has never become an essential requirement for employment and, perhaps more importantly, has never been emphasized by the major employers. The employment training required by industry was often realized on the job. Some residents, possibly unaware of more recent trends in human capital development, speak about some of these historic realities.

> There are very low levels of education here. Kids come out of school and go straight into the mill. ***Outfitter***
>
> I think there's a lot of people working in the forestry business or mining, and they haven't got no education. ***Outfitter***

These statements appear somewhat dated given recent statistics on educational attainment in Hinton and the perspectives of many local educators and industry representatives. The next section addresses some of these more contemporary views.

6.6.2 Rising Minimum Requirements

Given obvious changes in educational attainment indicated by the census numbers, many local perspectives on human capital development have changed as well. Certainly some young people do continue to find full-time employment straight from high school, but more emphasis is placed on higher education today and this emphasis has significantly re-directed previous educational patterns. Pressure from industry and the school system has placed Hinton firmly on the path toward higher levels of educational attainment. Representatives from industry and the school system speak about some of these developments.

> Well I think the industries and the major employers are looking for more....I guess placing higher expectations on skills and the knowledge levels of the people they employ. ***Mill Employee***
>
> There's very few jobs that you're going to go anywhere with a grade 12 education and the company no longer is interested in people that come in and at an entry level, say as a front-line supervisor, that are limited in terms of going on beyond that because of education or otherwise. So I think, that being the case, whether it's happening now but I see in the future, you know unless you're really motivated because that's the way your Dad did it and his Dad did it, and that's all you want to do. If you want to get ahead I think there's a recognition that you've got to go on minimally at least at the technical school and better than that, get a degree of some kind. ***Mill Employee***
>
> As a matter of fact, that was recognized many years ago to the extent that the management of the day stipulated that the minimum you needed was grade 12 to join the workforce here. That became a bit of a problem for us at the sawmill. We tried to honor it as best we could, but we're not just interested in warm bodies with grade 12 education and it seems that was in a way an attitude that if I grew up in Hinton and I had a grade 12 education then I'd done my thing for getting in the door and we were more interested in other behavioral attributes that people would be able to offer us for the long term. ***Mill Employee***
>
> When I was in high school kids definitely thought of the mill as a place to work. It's a quick-fix solution....It's harder to go straight to the mill now from high school. ***Young Mill Employee***

In large measure, the minimum qualification for entry-level jobs provides the impetus for increasing levels of education. As these residents state, perhaps there was a time when young people could find work with nothing but a strong body and a good attitude, but no longer. Formal education—often from some type of post-secondary institution or trade apprenticeship program— is a present reality for most job-seekers. This change alone has stimulated higher levels of human capital development.

Experts on human capital acquisition in resource communities point out that highly specialized education can lead to human capital development but they also raise a caution. Technical programs do not always lead to general skills applicable across several sectors of the economy. In such cases, human capital development might in fact lead to a condition of over-adaptation to a single industry. We do not have data on minimum entrance requirements in resource sectors. Nor do we have data on the transferability of skills that are acquired for work in mining, forestry, manufacturing or the oil patch. These would be illuminating data to collect. Again, if there are many opportunities in several sectors, for welders or equipment operators, one would assume that human capital investment in these areas would be appealing to local youths who would like to remain in the area. More research is required in this area to understand the extent to which highly technical skills are transferable within the regional economy.

6.6.3 Out of School and On the Job

In addition to industry's endorsement of higher minimum educational standards, other factors contribute to human capital development. Some new local institutions have emerged in recent decades responding to a shift in philosophy regarding the role of education and life-long learning in modern society. Specifically, there are wide-ranging opportunities to upgrade skills and to participate in adult education programs, both at work and at local educational institutions. For the person wishing to pursue post-secondary education in Hinton, there are a number of opportunities, including the *Yellowhead Regional Education Consortium* (YREC) and the *Environmental Training Centre*.

For employees of larger companies, skills upgrading is often built into corporate human resource development strategies. Sometimes training is carried out in-house, while other companies team with local institutions like YREC to provide training. All these initiatives are part of new thinking on human capital development, thinking reflected in the following statements.

> Something that has been really positive here is the high school. [The principal] has worked really hard at the registered apprenticeship training program. For kids who are not going on to university, they are doing their core courses and the rest of the time they are working towards their apprenticeship. We need to offer our young people some options if they want to stay in Hinton. ***Female Government Employee***
>
> In terms of people that are working (for the mill), I think quite a few of them take advantage of some of those courses. And then the company also supports a lot of training programs for its people. Certainly in terms of woods workers, the members of the IWA crew and our contractors are striving to give them stewardship training and training in environmental principles and so on, to make sure that doing the job that we express what we intend to do. ***Mill Employee***

6.6.4 *Past or Present Reality?*

Despite positive trends in Hinton's human capital development over the last two decades, we also documented some perspectives on educational attainment that are stereotypical of resource-dependent towns. For many people, problems of the past remain problems of the present. Initially, someone might be tempted to write these comments off as outdated or uninformed, except that all of the following statements come from people employed by or closely associated with the local educational system. Moreover, these comments come from people who are knowledgeable and concerned about human capital development in their town.

> Well, I can't speak authoritatively on this but I've heard that the principal of the high school has actually at times taken Weldwood to task for the fact that they actually take a lot of people right out of high school or before they graduate. The lure of $19.85 an hour starting salary is just too strong and a lot of people either quit before they get their diploma or as soon as they're done they choose not to go any further because they can get, essentially, a $20-an-hour job right out of high school. ***Resource Industry Employee***
>
> There is a very good chance that the kids I see as sons and daughters and other workers in this community may have the impression that they can have the same lack of education their parents have and it's not an easy thing to say to someone you know, "Look, you really do have to do more than your Mom or Dad did because the world has changed." ***High School Teacher***
>
> Well there are a lot of kids who don't look at post secondary as an option, especially if they have family working in the mines or the mills. ***Advanced Education Employee***

The census numbers on educational attainment suggest that Hinton has made recent gains in human capital development. Statements above, however, paint a picture that suggests there remains much room for improvement. What makes these statements noteworthy is not only what is said but the high degree to which each one of these individuals is connected to human capital promotion. Each of these people talks about education in ways that are incongruent with industry's view of changing minimum requirements for employment, as well as positive changes in educational attainment numbers (see Chapter 3). These perspectives allow us to make at least one conclusion here. Even though Hinton has made some gains in educational attainment, residents view human capital develop as a constant challenge. Although students can be encouraged and persuaded to further their education, they cannot be accused of irrational decision making when mill workers earn higher wages than many local professionals. In this case, incentives to work are seen to be stronger than incentives to stay in school.

6.6.5 Education As A Proxy Revisited

A number of individuals associated with social services consistently mention specific reasons for educational deficiencies. These perspectives are uniquely held by those most closely associated with the point where educational services and social services connect. Comments most often focus on three issues: home schooling, substance abuse, and shift work.

> There are a lot of teenagers that are in home schooling who aren't in home schooling; they are supposed to be in home schooling but they are not doing it, so all day they are just hanging around. And not getting anywhere, there will be a real problem with no education. We were talking about it this morning. There were only five graduates that went on to secondary education out of 100 and some. ***Social Services Employee***
>
> A lot of drug use in high school. I've never seen how accepted it is. I was overwhelmed at how available, how often, and where, and who. And actually how accepted it is for a lot of people, including their kids. Again, a lot of people will say it's because there is money in town. If you have the money, and it's available, somehow it seems to be acceptable. ***School Board Employee***
>
> There is a drug problem in high school but I just don't know if it's any worse than anywhere else. ***Physician***
>
> [Regarding shift work] I notice quite a bit of logistical issues for sure. And again, there are positives to it where people can function quite well. But a lot of kids I work with are being shuffled from this aunt for 2 hours, over to the baby sitter for 4 and then back to the house for someone to meet them for the night. ***School Board Employee***

These statements do not speak directly of human capital or educational attainment, but there is a connection (at least in the minds of residents) between these issues and the question of educational attainment. None of these perspectives are specifically observable in the census numbers, and generally speaking, educational attainment in Hinton is moving in a positive direction. This being the case, how can one account for markedly negative perspectives viewed against the general improvement in educational attainment? Are these statements merely descriptions of narrow views instead of broad perspectives or is there something more to the story?

The objective of this report is to describe and explain the condition of human capital development in the Foothills Model Forest. By marrying census data to resident perspectives, it is possible to gain a broad understanding of human capital development. But our method of measuring human capital employs educational attainment as a proxy. Educational attainment does not fully capture all dimensions of human capital and the extent to which non-educational issues contribute to and detract from human capital development. To an extent, educational attainment fails as a proxy for human capital. Certainly substance abuse, child home life, and parental involvement are broader human capital issues with respect to the capacity of individuals to succeed in the workforce and in society in general. So, although these statements may appear off base from the original question of educational attainment and human capital, we believe they are important to the broader human capital question.

6.7 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Education

Jasper is similar to many amenity-based communities that attract highly educated outsiders or "newcomers." There are few local opportunities to obtain post-secondary education in the vicinity. Therefore, Jasper's gains in educational attainment between 1981 and 1996 are attributable to either residents obtaining post-secondary education elsewhere and returning, or more highly educated newcomers entering the population. Given that Jasper has a high turnover rate in its population (34% between 1991 and 1996 alone), the latter scenario most likely explains the educational attainment gains in the local population. Jasper is famous for its ability to attract college and university students from across Canada to work for the summer. Furthermore, many well-educated newcomers live in Jasper during their twenties, after an undergraduate degree but before pursuing a professional career or graduate studies. Due to the nature of the Jasper economy (retail sales, recreational and visitor services, and the hospitality industry), many of these highly educated newcomers are underemployed.

6.7.1 Impact of Temporary Residents

According to the 1997 Municipal Census (Poboktan Communications, 1997b), temporary residents comprise just under 20% of the Jasper population. More than 50% of this population is in the 20- to 24-year age range and 90% of them intend to reside in Jasper for less than 6 months. Some analysts assume that because these people reside in Jasper for a portion of the year, they are counted in the national census figures and, therefore, distort the actual socio-demographic numbers for permanent (long-term) residents.

Before attributing the trends in Jasper educational levels to temporary residents, however, we should consider the differences between the national census and the municipal census data. The most recent municipal census was taken on June 10, 1997, at a time when many seasonal employees live and work in the community. The national census is also administered in June. But, for the national census, there is a residence requirement that many short-term residents do not meet. The net result is an under-counting of temporary residents in the national census and a more accurate profile of temporary residents in the municipal census. This fact accounts for the smaller national census population compared to the municipal census population. Therefore, although some temporary residents are included in the national census because they meet the residency requirement, the large population of summer workers does not overwhelm the Jasper socio-demographic profiles from the national census. Educational indicators, therefore, are likely to approximate the permanent resident profile for Jasper.

6.7.2 Jobs after High School

A common concern of Jasper parents is the choice their children face following high school. Unlike many rural and remote places in Canada, there are a significant number of local jobs available to young people exiting high school. But, while Hinton youth look forward to stable, high-wage jobs in the resource sector, Jasper youth face the prospect of unstable, seasonal, low-wage service-sector jobs. The part-time and seasonal nature of youth employment leaves ample time for youth to "hit the slopes", climb mountains, cycle, and otherwise enjoy the significant recreational opportunities the area has to offer. This relaxed attitude toward life after high school is expressed by a number of parents.

> Both my daughters have these type of boyfriends who work some, go to school for a while maybe, and then ski. It's a very mixed lifestyle. *Tourism Employee*
>
> She has lived here for 27 years. Children are finished school and live in town. They work during the evenings delivering pizza and then spend their days recreating. She believes this is a healthy and clean lifestyle for her children[16]. *Town Employee*

This kind of attitude toward life after high school, where most jobs require little in the way of formal education and those that do are few and far between, might provide part of the answer as to why educational attainment in Jasper has slowly dropped between 1981 and 1996. Whether one argues that declining educational attainment is due to lifestyle choices or limited employment opportunities, it is easy to see that Jasper generates an abundance of jobs, with few requiring advanced education.

6.7.3 Local Education Limits

After talking with a few families with children of high-school age, we became aware of how Jasper's remoteness affects educational attainment and human capital. Graduating high-school students face the difficult choice of leaving a "recreational paradise" if they wish to pursue further education. However, additional education does not necessarily improve their prospects for employment back in Jasper. This creates optimal conditions for underinvestment in human capital, but that does not appear to be occuring. Despite a vibrant culture and lots of activities for young adults (for a remote rural place), there are few activities and opportunities for school-aged children. Some residents suggested this as a reason for people moving away and, elsewhere in this report, we document the problem of retaining traditional working families in Jasper. This issue could have implications for sustainability if it persists over the long term.

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[16] Quotations in Arial font denote paraphrased statements.

There is not a lot to do that a larger metropolitan center would provide. Even clubs or groups that you can get involved with. Educational opportunities, you can't take night classes, you can't take continuing education classes. You can take them by correspondence but there is also part of that social element of being able to get out and going to the U of A for an extension course that you just can't do here. Some of those things are difficult. ***Town Employee***

There are many good things about living in Jasper. The community is one of those things. My wife is a school teacher so I've gotten to know many people and young kids that way. It's a very friendly and cooperative place. It's easy to bring up teenagers because there is lots of stuff to do. That being said, the town does very little for its kids. You'd have a problem if your child was not into outdoor activities. My kids love the snow. They are really big snowboarders. ***Tourism Employee***

There are no opportunities for kids here because it is too remote. To go any further in things like hockey or music or academics people are going to other centers to give their children the opportunities that aren't available here. He said that a grade one class will have 60-70 kids in it, but by the time they get to high school there are only 30-40 kids who graduate. Most of the out-migration is because parents are moving their kids to other centers so they have more opportunities. ***Business Operator***

Basically the high school is teaching to the 15% of excellence. 15% of the kids in the school are above the provincial average, therefore, 85% are below. It is harder to teach children with special needs and they are often left behind. There needs to be integration and there needs to be different programs that focus on the special needs rather than on the 15% above-average students. She feels that there is a large number of high school drop outs for this community because the kids are getting frustrated with the system.[17] ***Child Care Worker***

Each one of these individuals speaks to some inhibitor to human capital development. Remoteness is a defining aspect of Jasper by those who are drawn to the place for its wildlife and scenic beauty. But for families raising children and seeking educational opportunities, remoteness and isolation are serious obstacles to human development. Assistance for special-needs children, adult education and upgrading, non-recreational activities are all difficult to access. Currently, Jasper maintains a higher proportion of university-educated residents than any other jurisdiction of the Foothills Model Forest. Attraction to place and lifestyle choices brought that educated population to Jasper. Whether these same residents are able to instill educational goals and provide educational opportunities for their children remains to be seen. The extent to which this takes places will inform the scope of human capital development in the next generation.

6.7.4 Administration and Taxes

Residents often comment on financial and bureaucratic dimensions of education. Most notably there is intense concern over increasing school taxes and the regionalization of school-system management. These are not new concerns and the impact of such changes on educational attainment is unclear. Residents and community leaders have lost some control over their education system and to accept direction from outside the townsite adds to the sense of frustration with outside bureaucratic control in other areas of community life. These are a few statements from residents regarding these concerns.

I was on the school board for 10 years. Chairman for 3. We were almost like the town's council I guess. We did everything. Good school boards and good schools. It was an extremely stressful time because there were so many changes building the schools, lots of development. ***Senior Citizen***

Well I think it was managed in the olden days. I think it was managed very good. But now the taxes are going up. Government is going to want more land rent on the leases. It's going to go up. Tax is going to be 10% and then you pay provincial and school tax on top of that. I don't think people can afford it. They've got a set income and they don't have any money saved up. I don't think they can live here. ***Senior Citizen***

[17] Arial font denotes paraphrased comments.

Similar concerns about changing regulations, taxation, and control exist with health care, business development, and residential housing. One reason residents take these issues seriously is because, up until recently, they have exercised a great deal of control over the delivery of educational services in the community. Historically, Parks Canada managed other municipal services but left school administration to a local board. Now administration is centralized in Edson and residents feel some loss of control. Until some of the management issues between Town Council and Parks Canada are resolved, uncertainty and concern among citizens will continue.

6.8 Discussion

The objective of this report is to describe levels of human capital in the Foothills Model Forest and to compare these levels with provincial and national levels. In general, educational levels in Hinton are increasing, in part due to higher formal education requirements from local industries. A high proportion of Hinton residents hold non-university diplomas that are attainable locally through educational institutions such as the *Yellowhead Regional Education Consortium* (YREC) and the *Environmental Training Centre* (ETC). Interviews with Hinton residents suggest that, although formal education levels may be increasing, other factors affecting human capital development must be considered. These include: persistent educational disincentives such as high-wage jobs for high-school graduates, drug and alcohol abuse, and the effect of shiftwork on child development.

Educational attainment in Jasper is increasing at a rate higher than in Hinton. This phenomenon does not appear to be driven by the labor market, however. There may be some influence of Parks Canada employment policies. As well, some of the current managerial positions in the hospitality industry may require business, marketing or specialized hospitality/service degrees that were not requirements 15 years ago. Most of our respondents suggested that there are just more university-educated people underemployed in the community. That is, many people choose to live in Jasper more for lifestyle reasons than for career reasons. Again, the extremely high migration rates in Jasper suggest that people may make this choice for a period in their life, but not permanently. Jasper's human capital endowment has interesting implications for community sustainability and adaptability. One might expect that the high levels of educational attainment would provide the community with a great deal of human capital to draw upon in times of crisis or when specific challenges face the community. However, many people, although educated, know they are only in the community for a short time. They may have the human capital, but may not choose to invest it in the community. Certainly, there are many dedicated, community-minded individuals and families residing in Jasper. But, by their own admission, many such residents feel they are a minority and shrinking fast relative to the growth of impermanent, albeit highly educated, newcomers.

In Hinton's case, there appears to be some evidence for rational underinvestment in human capital. In Jasper's case, educational attainment appears to be growing despite few outlets for using post-secondary education in the workplace. Sustainable communities are those that can take advantage of changing local and global conditions. Human capital development facilitates community adaptability by creating a flexible, multi-skilled workforce. To the degree that human capital in both Hinton and Jasper is increasing, the communities may be well-situated to face future challenges. However, given the transience in both communities, one of the most significant challenges facing Jasper and Hinton is securing the attachment to place and commitment on the part of their residents to encourage them to invest some of their human capital in community development issues.

6.9 Appendix

6.9.1 Hinton: Additional Statements on Education

We hire from this area I think for mill jobs. A lot of people who graduate from high school end up working in the mill but, in terms of professional and technical people, we hire the best candidate for the job. ***Mill Employee***

Like anywhere, people are educated and others are not. If you're educated, you get ahead. If you upgrade yourself, obtain your skills, promote yourself by whatever means you can. And if you don't do that it's going to mean very low-paying jobs. ***Social Services Employee***

There really aren't many lower education people because we have a really high rate of graduation. ***Retired Community Leader***

There are quite a few women who work in the mine. I think it depends on your education and your training and the opportunities. If you are in the mine in an office-type setting, but then that is not one of the good paying jobs at the mine. You have to have some sort of heavy equipment operation or something like that to get one of the better paying jobs, or a ticket, like a trades ticket and there is nothing like that in Hinton. I know one woman that is taking an apprenticeship program to be a mechanic and other that...I know one lady that went through welding apprentice. I think most women here would go to chamber maid or waitressing. They don't think about the trades. ***Women's Shelter***

I see on a number of occasions we have kids that can't function in school for whatever reason, and so they either drop out or are kicked out, they go into the home-schooling base, and these are the kids that sit in my office and they have a perception that they are not going anyplace. ***Social Services Employee***

There were children within the school system that were sort of falling through the cracks. There were no services available to connect with those kids and those families to help out. With the education cuts, there were no counselors in the schools or they were half-time teachers too. ***School Board Employee***

They've (parents) told them you know you don't have to worry about school because you'll always have a job at the mill because I work there and your Dad worked there and your grandfather. ***Advanced Education Employee***

Well, those of us who've gone to school and made sacrifices and put in the effort, are making the bigger bucks. And those who are flipping burgers, well, that's their choice, I guess. I went 2 years without a job, just working to finish my education, just so that I could have a job that pays a little better. ***Forest Industry Employee***

Like anywhere people are educated and others are not. If you're educated you get ahead. If you upgrade yourself, obtain your skills, promote yourself by whatever means you can. And if you don't do that it's going to mean very low paying jobs. ***Social Services Employee***

6.9.2 Jasper: Additional Statements on Education

We don't have an idea what is going on with education taxes unless they change something in Jasper and Banff, unless the province re-looks at the situation here. The education portion of our taxes here is crazy. ***Town Councillor***

It does have a lot to offer. It doesn't really deal with the issues though like broken homes. It's just another part of the pink bubble. They're trying to make it look nice. ***Town Employee***

The school district and the town committee are doing a good job. Parks has been running the show so that's where the buck stops. ***Town Employee***

There's not really any community spirit here except for the school. The school mixes things up. The railroaders stick together. They have ensured that there's a winter population here. The jocks mix together. They're out on the trails and the ski hills. It's a sports town. You also have all the business guys who hang out. Parks people really stick together. No one cares what anybody else does. ***Local Artist***

The consortium caters to adult students who want to finish their education and move on to college or university. Most of the people that come in to use this service are these seasonal workers that have been working in the service industry. ***Town Employee***

Some of the main issues that are facing the town and especially the seniors are the lack of public transportation and the increase in the land tax and education tax. The seniors are worried that they may not be able to afford to live in Jasper because of these increases. ***Town Employee.***

Some places have a problem just getting their kids to go to school. We have very responsible people. We are rated the highest high school in northwestern Alberta. We have an international program and we have 14 students from around the world for next year. It adds a unique dimension to the school. ***School Employee***

At the same time we have a school board, a local school board, and that school board had some limited municipal functions because we had no other town body here, so the school board looked after the pool the arena, the museum, things like that, as well the school and school grounds, the ball diamond, stuff like that. ***Business Professional***

Parents worry more than kids about further employment. I suppose kids have to leave Jasper to go to post secondary and to get training that is flexible. That is probably the big one. ***School Employee***

I'm pretty much satisfied for the needs that I have and that my family has. I'd like to see some more services maybe in the school but I can recognize why they're not there. Even things like French immersion and stuff which we can't have and don't have here. I shouldn't say we can't have it, we don't have it. ***Business Professional***

6.9.3 Census Data Tables

Table 6.1 Population 15 years +, by level of education, 1996

Census Divisions	Total population 15 years and over by highest level of schooling								
	Total	Less than grade 9	Gr. 9-13 no certif.	Gr. 9-13 certif.	Trades diploma	Other non-univ. no diploma	Other non-univ. diploma	University no degree	University degree
Hinton	7,330	490	2,345	1,070	260	500	1,690	480	495
Yellowhead	7,060	760	2,560	925	330	435	1,350	400	200
Jasper	3,585	75	630	590	55	325	915	510	480
Foothills	17,975	1,325	5,535	2,585	645	1,260	3,955	1,390	1,175
Edson	5,395	400	1,765	690	250	405	1,165	405	310
Grande Cache	3,150	175	975	430	165	200	790	240	180
Whitecourt	5,550	310	1,680	810	215	360	1,275	390	505
Edmonton	483,100	38,145	115,640	54,830	15,685	34,320	96,055	52,915	75,505
Alberta	2,055,020	154,675	534,545	243,075	68,030	147,820	423,330	210,785	272,755
Canada	22,628,925	2,727,210	5,140,790	3,238,590	837,155	1,474,925	4,012,580	2,196,890	3,000,780

Table 6.2 Population 15 Years +, by broad categories of education, 1996

Census Divisions	Total population 15 years and over by				
	Total population 15 yrs and older	No school	Less than Grade 13*	Some trades or non-univ.	Some university
Hinton	7,335	5	3,905	2,185	975
Yellowhead	7,060	0	4,245	1,780	695
Jasper	3,640	55	1,295	1,240	990
Foothills	18,035	60	9,445	5,205	2,660
Edson	5,500	105	2,855	1,575	715
Grande Cache	3,305	155	1,580	995	420
Whitecourt	5,545	5	2,800	1,640	900
Edmonton	489,510	6,410	208,610	130,375	128,420
Alberta	2,082,325	27,305	932,295	571,150	483,535
Canada	22,945,485	316,560	11,106,590	5,487,505	5,197,665

* includes with certificate

Table 6.3 Education categories as a percentage of total population 15 years +, 1996

Census Divisions	Percentage of total population 15 years and over by highest level of schooling				
	Total population 15 yrs and older	Less than Grade 9	Less than Grade 13	Some trades or non-univ.	Some university
Hinton	7,335	6.6	53.2	29.8	13.3
Yellowhead	7060	10.8	60.1	25.2	9.8
Jasper	3,640	2	36	34	27
Foothills	18,035	7.3	52.4	31.3	14.7
Edson	5,500	7.3	51.9	28.6	13
Grande Cache	3,305	5.3	47.8	30.1	12.7
Whitecourt	5,545	5.6	50.5	29.6	16.2
Edmonton	489,510	8	43	27	26
Alberta	2,082,325	7.5	44.8	27.4	23.2
Canada	22,945,485	12.1	48.4	23.9	22.6

Table 6.4 Education categories as a percentage of total population 15 years +, 1981

Census Divisions	Total population 15 yrs. and over	Less than Grade 13	Some trades or non-univ.	Some university
Hinton	5,830	60.8	27.5	11.7
Yellowhead	6,590	75.9	17.5	6.7
Jasper	2,855	50.4	28.0	21.4
Foothills	15,275	65.3	23.3	11.4
Edson	4,165	59.7	24.8	15.5
Grande Cache	3,055	58.6	30.1	11.3
Whitecourt	3,875	63.4	23.7	13.0
Edmonton	419,460	51.8	26.6	21.5
Alberta	1,672,620	55.6	26.0	18.4
Canada	18,609,285	60.9	23.1	16.0

Table 6.5 School attendance, 1981-1996

	Canada	Alberta	Hinton	Yellowhead	Jasper
1996					
Total population (15+)	22,945,485	2,082,325	7,335	7,060	3,640
Attending school full time	2,275,135	197,730	620	640	295
Attending school part time	235,590	23,355	70	85	50
1991					
Total population (15+)	21,304,740	1,918,290	6,545	6,330	2,915
Attending school full time	2,124,995	189,345	565	600	220
Attending school part time	239,530	22,615	70	15	35
1981					
Population (15 +)	18,609,285	1,672,620	5,830	6,590	2,855
Attending school full time	2,170,820	185,840	565	590	340
Not attending school full time	16,438,465	1,486,785	5,265	6,000	2,515

Chapter 7.
REAL ESTATE

7.1 Objective

To assess real estate values as a measure of community sustainability. Among other measures, average payments on housing are compared to median household income to determine the relative change in real estate values from 1981 to 1996. Proportion of owners versus renters is also examined as an indicator of prosperity and confidence in long-term regional economic activity, along with perspectives on real estate from local residents.

7.2 Rationale

There is substantial anecdotal evidence that the boom-and-bust cycles of primary resource industries cause similar cycles in host-community property values. Dramatic increases and decreases in the value of land often translate into stressful, if not destructive, circumstances for the average resident. Both market and non-market factors play a role in the value of real estate. Depending on the extent to which these factors can be identified and anticipated, residents of resource-dependent communities may be able to mitigate some of the historic volatility in local real estate markets.

7.3 Real Estate as an Indicator of Community Sustainability

By definition, large resource-sector firms dominate the local economic picture in resource-dependent communities. The economic prospects of small businesses and households are directly tied to the fate of the mill or the mine. This is true even for businesses and households that do not do business with or hold jobs in the dominant resource firms. Real estate values are one of the primary factors that tie everyone in the community to the dominant industry. Investment in a primary residence is often the largest investment a person makes in the course of his or her life. Therefore, making a bad investment in real estate may seriously jeopardize individual or household well-being.

In resource communities, there is always the danger that short-term economic crises in the resource sectors will lead to downturns in the real estate market. At a minimum, periods of depressed commodity prices or protracted labor conflict lead to stagnant housing markets. People are usually unwilling to buy in periods of instability, and sellers, if they are able, are likely to wait until the local economic situation stabilizes before they put their house on the market. Mill or mine closures or permanent downsizing of the labor force can lead to significant declines in real estate values — with serious consequences for middle-class families. Freudenburg (1992: 322) describes the unfortunate scenario that often plays out in declining resource communities.

> In many "bust" communities, persons who a few months earlier had considered themselves comfortable, secure, middle-class homeowners have suddenly found just how vulnerable their apparent security had been. Despite years of mortgage payments, they have suddenly found the remaining debt on the home to exceed the total value of their homes on the market—and in all too many cases, these former members of what might be called a tenuous middle class will find they have too little remaining income to continue making the payments even if they would have otherwise been so inclined.

For this reason, it is important to monitor real estate values in resource communities, to determine if they mirror national or provincial trends, or to determine if they are susceptible to local economic cycles and represent aberrations from regional trends.

New housing prices and housing starts are used as primary indicators of economic performance in Canada. When a new home is constructed, there are economic spin-offs to numerous industries. Lumber, appliance, cement, carpet, and furniture manufacturers, along with their associated trades people, directly benefit from new home construction. Because of this industrial convergence in new home construction, housing starts serve as a reliable measure of economic activity. Furthermore, local buyers will only seek large or new homes if they feel reasonably positive about local economic conditions. Likely, a new home buyer will feel less concerned about a 20-year mortgage if he or she believes their employment income will extend throughout the 20-year period. In this sense, the number of housing starts and the price of new homes are reliable indicators of regional economic performance and, to a large extent, measure confidence in future economic prosperity. Another important aspect of new housing prices is year-to-year fluctuations that provide a rough measure of inflation. As market values are used increasingly to set tax rates, increasing housing costs can indicate substantial increases in a family's cost of living.

Average housing prices are useful indicators of inflation but, in simplifying the data to average values, the distribution of house values—differentiated by new and old homes, new and old neighborhoods, large and small homes—is subsumed by a single value. Commonly reported average income data (see Chapter 4) illustrate the same issue of masking the potential concentrations of high and low income while giving the impression that a majority of individuals earn an average wage. For instance, in Hinton there is some evidence from the narrative data that the most active housing market is below $100,000. As the average price for a home in Hinton is $140,000, the low-end housing market appears to be offset by a high-end market. In effect, homes sold in the middle range of around $140,000 may be quite uncommon. Unfortunately, Canadian census data are not reported in such a way to make it possible to analyze real estate markets to this degree of detail.

In surveying the housing landscape of Hinton and Jasper, there are some unmistakable differences between the two communities. Hinton residential areas consist of at least three types: there is a section of older homes built in the valley in close proximity to the mill, there are a number of newer subdivisions constructed mostly upwind from the mill and somewhat isolated from other subdivisions by undeveloped land, and there are a number of trailer-park subdivisions that accommodate more than 15% of the town's residents distributed throughout the town (Community Profile, 1998). Many of these trailer parks have taken on a somewhat permanent existence after decades of use and now provide a large market for low-end housing. The persistence of the trailer parks is partly attributable to Hinton being a young town. However, it may also be due to the fact that some people are reluctant to vest themselves in what they consider to be a risky or volatile market. With a trailer home, if times get tough, you can always move your residence to greener pastures. The same is not true for new subdivision homes.

In contrast, the Jasper townsite is much smaller than Hinton with only one identifiable subdivision called Cabin Creek. The most noticeable aspect of housing in Jasper is the small size of older homes compared to much larger modern dwellings, and the relatively high density of housing typically associated with urban centers. Although the size and quality of homes vary in Jasper almost as much as they do in Hinton, land scarcity makes even the most modest dwelling relatively expensive. The scarcity of land in Jasper, and the pressures that lead toward redevelopment of lots, is resulting in more mixed neighborhoods in Jasper, as small bungalows are slowly being replaced by larger multi-unit structures and condominiums. Cooperative housing developments and condominiums are putting downward pressure on market values, but the average price for homes remains high. These unique real estate markets in the Foothills Model Forest figure strongly in the ongoing discussion of community sustainability.

7.4 Measuring the Value of Shelter and Property

Property values and the cost of living are easily two of the most pressing issues for residents living in the Foothills Model Forest. Many of these concerns are represented in the narrative discussion to follow but, before we examine local perspectives on this indicator, we will review the secondary real estate data available for the Foothills Model Forest. This section will provide some basis to evaluate more recent local perspectives on real estate.

The figures in this section compare values such as rent and household expenses over a 15-year period. For the purposes of comparison, all values are adjusted for inflation to 1996 dollars. For instance, the value of a dwelling in 1991 is adjusted for inflation by a factor of 1.072 to allow for direct comparison of dwelling values in 1996. This inflation adjustment procedure makes multi-year comparisons more accurate by incorporating cost-of-living changes and allowing analysts to examine changes in rent and property values relative to what they would have paid if they were earning 1996 wages.

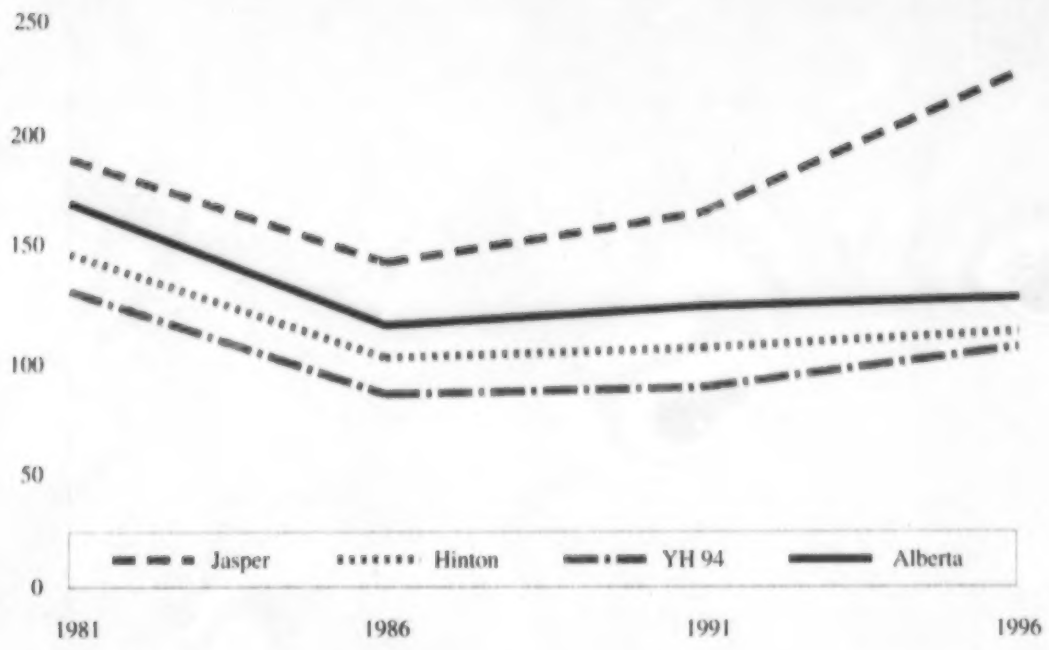

Figure 7.1 Average value of a dwelling in 1996 dollars.

Figure 7.1[15] illustrates the average value of a dwelling in 1996 dollars. Trends for Hinton, YH 94, and the province are relatively uniform. Housing values dropped between 1981 and 1986 and then remained constant after 1986. Jasper deviates from this trend in 1986 with a modest rise in average values that rise even more dramatically after 1991. In terms of housing costs between jurisdictions, Jasper (represented by the top line) remains the most expensive community in which to own a home. Hinton and YH 94 housing costs are consistently below provincial real estate values, with the rural areas of the Model Forest (YH 94) consistently remaining the least expensive.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 are measures of the cost of securing shelter. These figures report housing costs for a family or individual on a month-to-month basis. For homeowners, Statistics Canada measures *major payments*, which are the total average monthly payments made by owners to secure shelter. This would include expenses such as a mortgage, insurance, and other monthly costs related to shelter. For renters, Statistics Canada measures average monthly rent payments. Unlike Figure 7.1, there is little uniformity to the average payments depicted in Figures 7.2 and 7.3. Furthermore, there appears to be little correlation between average values and monthly payments. Although the average value of a dwelling in Jasper is much higher than provincial averages, the owner's major payment on housing is similar for 1996. Because of the sharp difference in housing values, lower expenses for homes in Jasper indicate that home owners there either bought property much earlier or have more equity in their homes.

Until 1991, Hinton homeowners reported the highest level of major payments on shelter. In 1991, Hinton homeowners paid approximately $750 per month for shelter while Jasper owners paid $612 and rural Model Forest residents paid $540. With the exception of Jasper, where major payments peaked in 1986 and increased again after 1991, there appears to be a general trend toward lower payments for owned dwellings until 1991, when payments in all jurisdiction began to rise. Jasper had the sharpest incline in major payments, correlating with the dramatic increase in average dwelling values in Figure 7.1. Figure 7.3 depicts change in monthly payments for shelter made by non-owners. The most noteworthy trend is the drop in average rent in Hinton from just over $860 in 1981 to around $568 in 1991. All jurisdictions show an overall trend of decline in monthly rent payments from 1981 to 1996.

[15] Unless otherwise noted, all figure sources are from Statistics Canada, Data Documentation for Profile Series Part A and Part B, Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1996, 1991, 1986, 1981. *Census of Canada*.

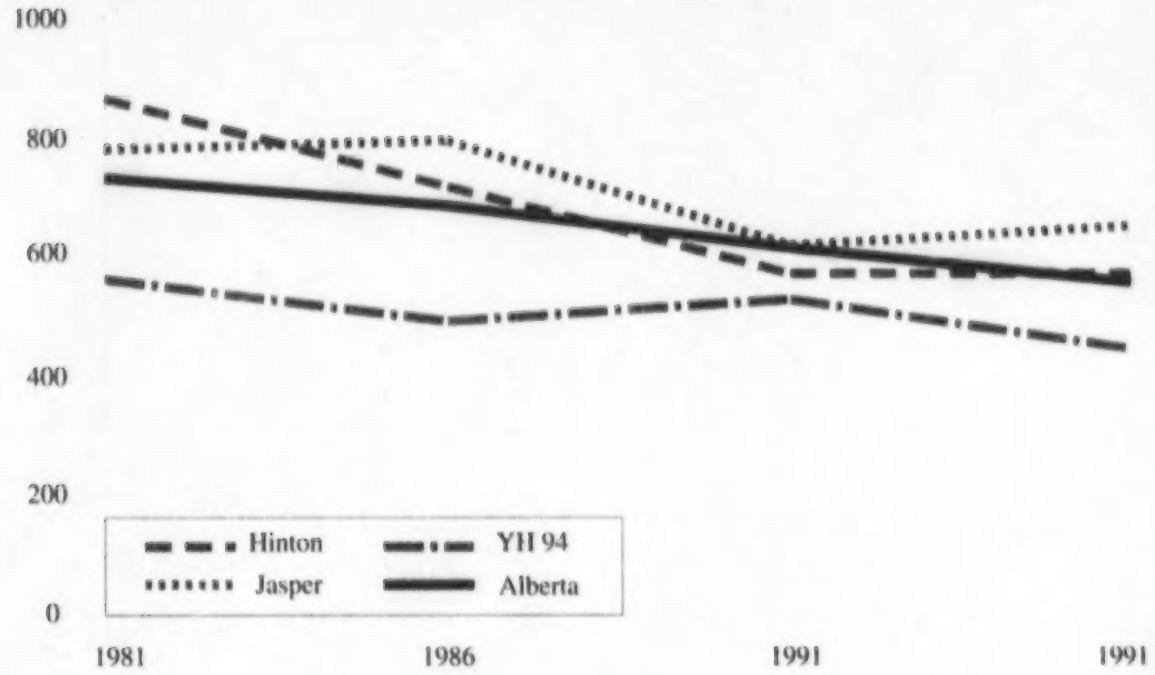

Figure 7.2 *Average gross rent, 1981–1996.*

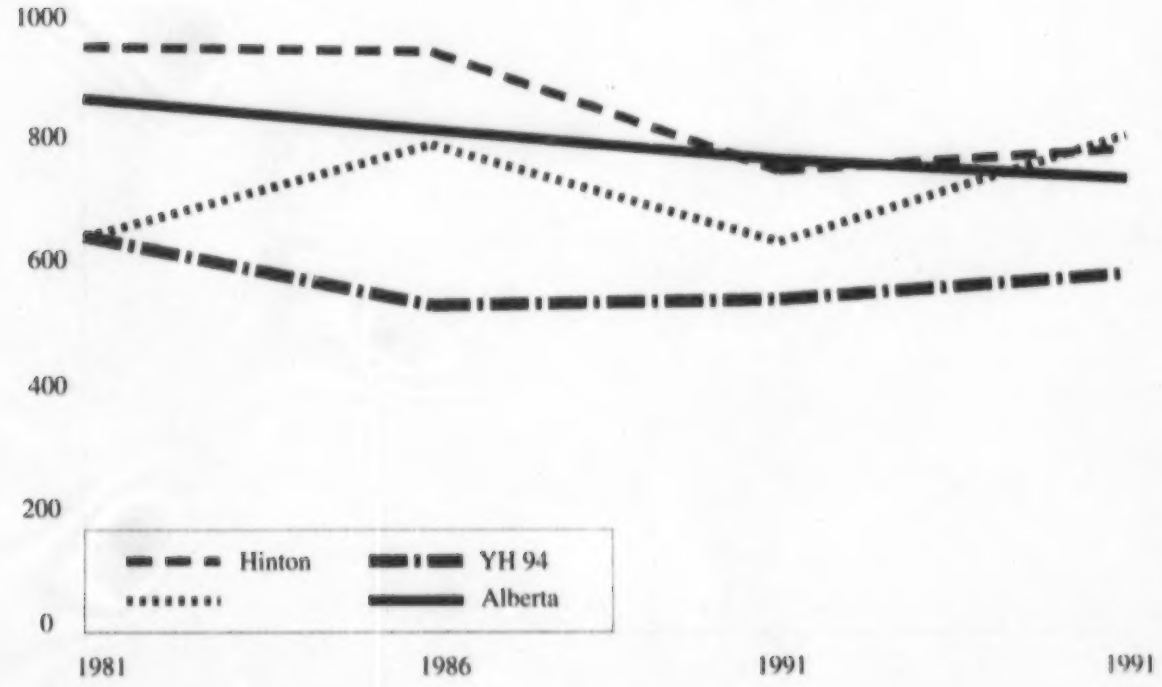

Figure 7.3 *Owner's major payments on housing, 1981–1996.*

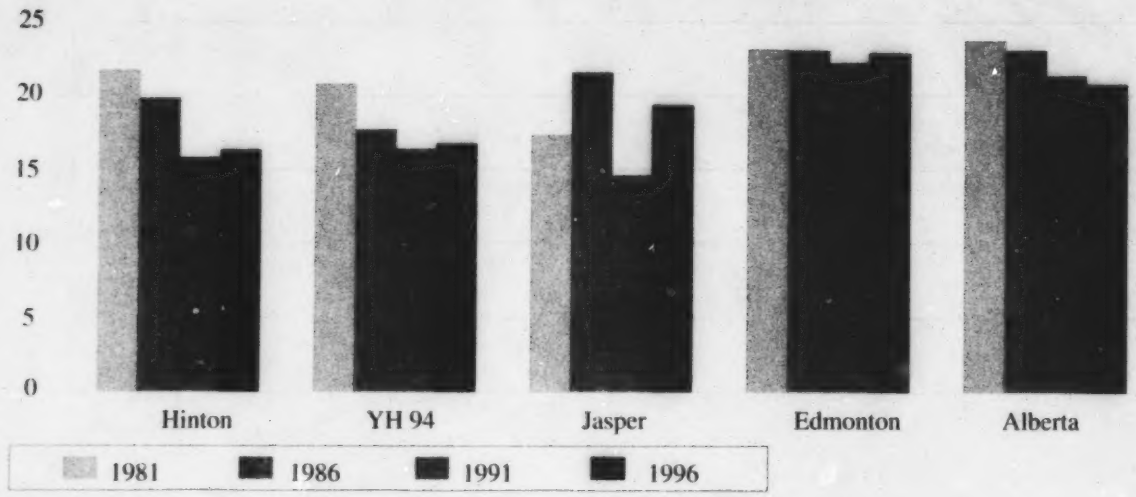

Figure 7.4 Household payments as a proportion of median income, 1981–1996.

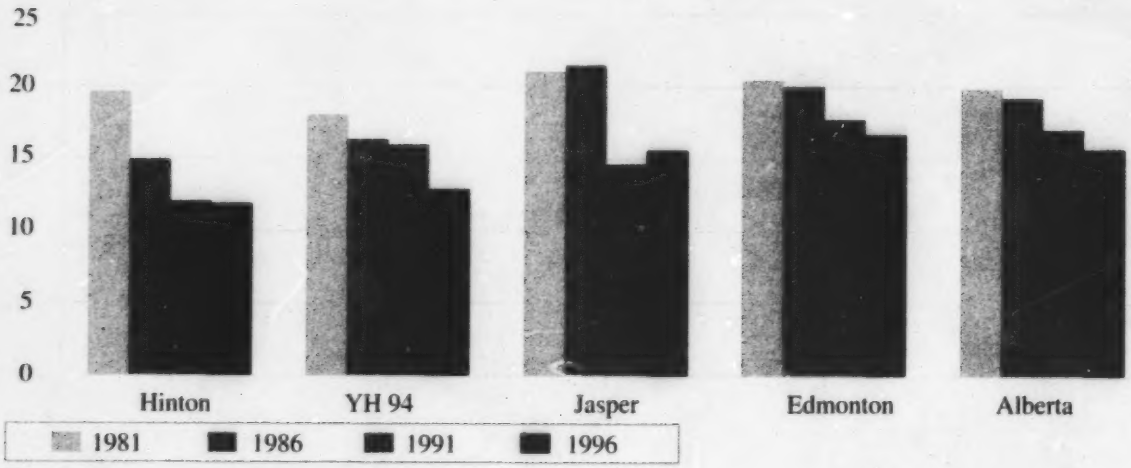

Figure 7.5 Gross rent as a proportion of median income, 1981–1996.

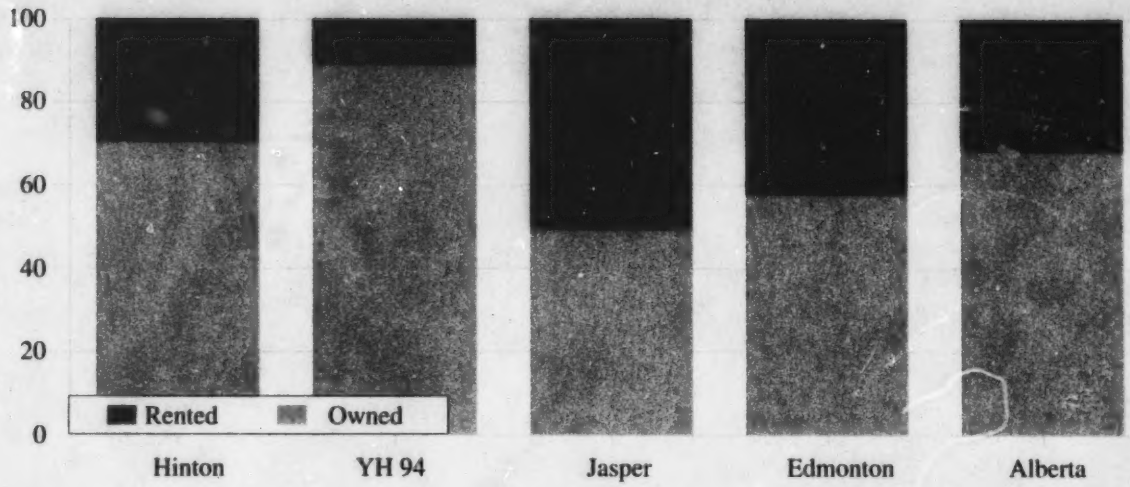

Figure 7.6 *Percent of owned and rented dwellings, 1996.*

As discussed earlier, this time series data is adjusted for inflation to reflect costs in 1996 dollars. This is similar to holding salaries constant in 1996 dollars and looking back to 1986 and 1981 to determine what owners and renters would pay for shelter compared to what they are paying today. Figures 7.4 and 7.5 make this connection between a median income and the cost of shelter more explicit by comparing the proportion of income dedicated to payments on housing for each time period. Instead of adjusting income to 1996 dollars, Statistics Canada simply divides the actual cost for housing by the actual median income[19] in each reported time period.

Although the visual representation of this information in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 initially appears dissimilar to previous figures, the story remains the same. In 1986, Jasper homeowners contributed the highest proportion of their income to shelter (21.5%), but this proportion dropped sharply from 1986 to 1991. In fact, residents in rural areas of the Model Forest found themselves contributing more of their income to shelter than either Hinton or Jasper for 1991. Between 1981 and 1996, there was a significant drop in major payments for rent and, on the whole, Model Forest residents contribute less of their income to shelter than do residents of Edmonton or the province.

The last two figures in this section depict the percentage of owned dwellings versus the percentage of rented dwellings in 1996 (Fig. 7.6) and the percentage change in the proportion of owners between 1981 and 1996. Assuming that home ownership is preferable to renting—in that residents will purchase homes if they are interested in long-term residence and have the financial stability to assume a mortgage—the proportion of owners can serve as a measure of community stability. As expected, the highest proportion of rented dwellings (50%) are in Jasper while the lowest proportion (14%) are in the rural jurisdiction of the Foothills Model Forest. The proportion of homeowners in Hinton is similar to the proportion of homeowners in the entire province and the average proportion of homeowners in the Foothills Model Forest is comparable to the provincial average at around 64%. Figure 7.7 shows the trend in ownership between 1986 and 1996 and shows how the breakdown of owners and renters has changed over a 15-year period. Although change in the proportion of owners is reported in Figure 7.7, there is an equal change in the opposite direction for the proportion of renters. For example, home ownership in YH94 increased 28.9% and conversely, the proportion of renters dropped 29%. Jasper data for 1981 are unavailable but, between 1986 and 1991, it is below all reported jurisdictions with a 20.6% increase in home ownership. All jurisdictions report a proportional increase in home ownership.

Between 1981 and 1991, we can observe mixed trends related to shelter and property: the relative cost of shelter in terms of rent and major payments by owners decreased except for owner's major payments in Jasper; except for Jasper, the value of homes declined in relation to the cost-of-living, and the proportion of home ownership among residents increased.

[19] Chapter 4, Income Distribution, contains a detailed description of median income and income distribution.

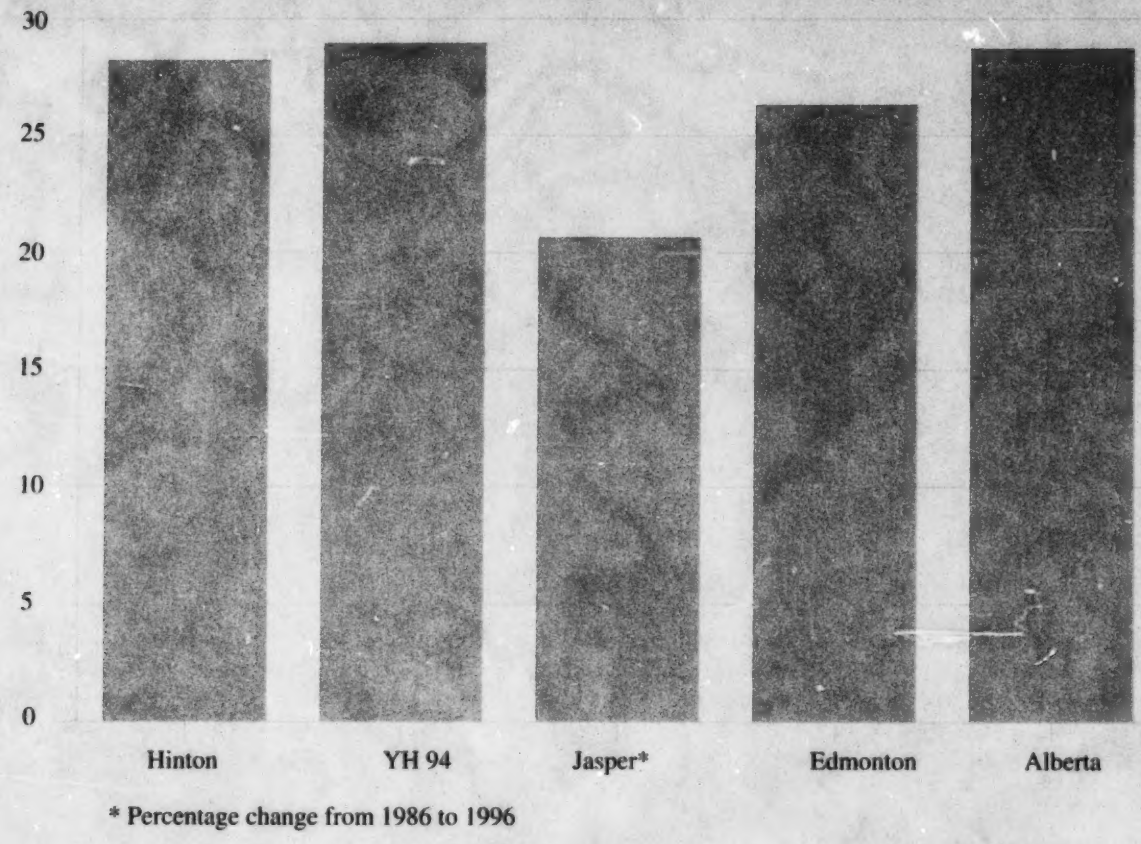

Figure 7.7 Percentage change in owned dwellings, 1981–1996.

7.5 Hinton: Community Perspectives on Real Estate

There are two primary ways that real estate values can serve as community sustainability indicators. If indeed local real estate markets are volatile in resource sectors, we should be able to observe fluctuations in local real estate markets that are asynchronous with provincial or national trends. In Hinton, over the past 15 years, there have been no significant crises in the resource sectors. Pulp prices took a sharp downward turn in the mid-1990s, and the uncertainty around the Cheviot mine has led to significant talk about effects on the real estate market, but to date, no significant aberrations have shown up in the secondary data.

Secondly, from timber to furniture, numerous sectors of the economy benefit from new home construction. Furthermore, the cost of those new homes provides analysts with a measure of inflation and a strong sense of the regional attitude toward current and future economic prosperity. The government regularly measures this economic activity by measuring the number of new homes built and the price of new homes in each region of Canada.

The diverse economic base of the Foothills Model Forest places diverse demands on real estate, with special restrictions on housing development within the National Park and relatively high-priced land at the east and west entrances to the Park. In Hinton specifically, new housing developments mark the outskirts of town and provide an impressive initial sense of prosperity within the community. As in every regional economy, long-term investments in land and homes are affected by

the nature of industry in the region and, from the perspective of average new home prices, life is good for many residents. Hinton real estate is a reflection of its economic history and a strong determinant in the ongoing question of community sustainability. Many residents realize the important role real estate values play in the sustainability question—perhaps because it directly affects all residents—and they are eager to discuss the issue. Comments are grouped into four distinct themes: positive markets, relative markets, nervous markets, and restrictive markets.

7.5.1 *Positive Markets*

Most residents agree that slow and steady growth in real estate values is good for homeowners and, therefore, good for the community. They also concede that market volatility brought on by repeated cycles of good and bad economic news and the associated impact on consumer confidence is a negative condition that exists in many resource-based towns. By most accounts, the Hinton real estate market over the past few years can be characterized as a dynamic yet non-volatile market where the demand for housing and the cost of housing, although experiencing some decline in the early 1980s, is relatively stable and growing. In this sense, real estate accurately reflects steady economic growth in the region. Economic activity in Hinton did not suffer the same degree of volatility experienced by other resource-dependent communities because of local diversification among resource industries. Residents recognize this situation in comments about the real estate market.

> In the last number of years, things have been a lot more stable. There has been continued growth in terms of real estate values but it doesn't seem to be subject to the big swings that it used to be. ***Hotel Manager***
>
> If we are growing from within it will create a demand for housing and housing is always the best indicator of growth. I would see slow and steady growth. ***Government Employee***

All the positive economic activity has naturally translated into buoyant real estate markets. Positive does not necessarily translate into affordable, however. Affordability is a key concern for many residents, especially those residents new to the community, with decisions about long-term residence hinging on the quality and cost of shelter. Herein lies a common paradox. Regional economic prosperity attracts in-migrants seeking employment or business opportunities. This economic prosperity also stimulates the real estate market, driving demand and prices higher, sometimes to levels prohibiting newcomers from finding commercial space or accommodation at a reasonable price. One town officer mentions this relationship between real estate values and economic activity with some degree of resignation.

> It would be lovely if you could have a town that was really on the move, that had a lot of good paying jobs, and yet the housing market was depressed. They go hand in hand. If you have a community that is really vibrant and growing, housing prices are up. ***Town Employee***

Indeed housing prices are up in Hinton and they reflect precisely the willingness of people to pay. As suggested earlier, those paying new home prices in Hinton are often long-term Hinton residents. Long-term residents, with long-term investments in homes and land, are predictably less concerned about the slow and steady growth in real estate value. In contrast, those with the most concern about prices are likely recent in-migrants comparing the cost of Hinton homes to other centers of similar size in other parts of the country. For instance, in 1991, the average value of a dwelling in Hinton was $97,000, while the average values in Edson, Wainwright, and Brooks were $77,000, $75,000, and $83,000, respectively (Statistics Canada census data for 1991).

7.5.2 *Relative Markets*

From the estimated value of a new home in Table 7.1, it is clear that the cost of buying a home in Hinton is increasing. But relative to wages and property values in other resource-based communities, is this dynamic real estate market overheated? Relative values reported over a 10-year period in Section 7.4 suggest this common perspective may not be accurate when the cost-of-living adjustment over the same period is taken into consideration. One senior citizen, when faced with the question of current real estate values, responded with the following statement.

> Well, it's really relative because the first house we built, we spent $9,000. If we were both working and still making approximately what we had, it would be the same as it was when it was a $27,000 house. So, in 1950, your house cost you your year's salary. I'd say in the 1980s, it was 130% of your salary. Probably now in the 1990s, it's 150% to 200% of your salary. So it has increased, but not outrageous. Gas is the same. Cigarettes. In proportion, sure it's a lot of money, but compared to your income I don't know whether it is or not. ***Senior Citizen***

Here we have a local perspective somewhat compatible with the reported Statistics Canada data. Although prices for new homes in Hinton are rising from year to year in terms of the total number of dollars spent, compared to wages, the trend is much less dramatic. As suggested in the above statement, an average new home will cost somewhere between 150 to 200% of an average annual family income. As the average family income in Hinton in 1991 was around $53,000 and the average price of a home was around $97,000, the cost of a new home was about 185% of the average family income. This comparison between home values and income is a useful measure of cost on a year-to-year basis. If new home costs continue to rise in proportion to wages, then residents may have little cause for alarm. If, on the other hand, the percentage of annual income required to purchase a new home continues to rise, then questions should surface regarding affordability and potential ways to address the issue (such as low-cost housing developments). Since 1991, the cost of new homes has increased by about $35,000. It is unlikely that average family incomes have risen proportionally and, as an indicator, this *affordability ratio* may provide community leaders and property developers with some cause for concern about the ability of average residents to pay for housing within the community.

In addition to the question of new home prices compared to average annual incomes, residents comment on the relative cost of new homes compared to other parts of the country. Specifically, other resource-based or tourism-based communities are targeted as suffering from "even more inflated" housing values than Hinton. In some ways, Hinton is seen to be, if not spared, then at least slower than other communities in feeling the effects of high property values. Being situated adjacent to Jasper, where property values eclipse those in Hinton, residents have some reason for consolation.

> I would think that the economic picture for Hinton is quite good and the price of land in this area is still relatively low compared to an equivalent like a Banff or a Canmore. I've seen, I even know quite a few people who work in Jasper and live in Hinton or surrounding areas just due to the cost in Jasper. ***Resource Industry Employee***
>
> It depends on where you've lived in the province. Living in other resource-based communities, they are high but there's a lot worse as well. As an example, Fort McMurray's a lot worse, Cochrane is getting worse now because the push from Canmore's even coming further east. They're higher than Edmonton though, but probably equivalent to Calgary. ***Resource Industry Employee***

These comments reflect a fairly positive attitude toward real estate values in Hinton. Yes, prices are higher than in other communities, but compared to average incomes in Hinton and average prices in comparable resource-based communities, the local situation is quite tolerable. If residents can afford to buy a home, they stand to benefit from a recent history of slow and steady growth. Inasmuch as these comments represent a dominant perspective on real estate, the following statements communicate a much different perspective on the future of property values related to the future of economic development in the region.

7.5.3 *Nervous Markets*

One of the stronger themes, in contrast to the comments expressed above, is a general nervousness regarding the future of resource-extractive industries. Residents know that the strength of the real estate market is a reflection of the strength of the regional economy—most notably, the historic economic backbone of mining and forestry. Although there are some indications that these industries are situated to sustain extractive activities for decades to come, residents are increasingly aware of external threats. Two obvious threats include global competition and heightened environmental awareness in the national and international political arena that threatens traditional resource management practices. Exhibiting some of this awareness, residents declare some discomfort in dedicating 200% of their annual family income to the cost of a new home.

The forests you know that bothers me...we all want nice things...I wouldn't mind moving into a nice house...but I don't want to pay $180,000 for a house...because I don't know how much longer its going to sustain me paying for a house. *Environmentalist*

My husband has lived here for 10 years and they've always been inflated because of the industry. Now how long that can be sustained is anyone's guess. As long as these industries stay here, the prices will stay up. If one goes out, it's not going to have a good impact economically. I think they are too high. Have there been any initiatives such as coop housing or any other kind of low-income housing developments? It seems that all along this valley here, the housing costs are high. Even though there seems to be a lot of room for building homes here, very different than the Jasper situation, they still can't build them fast enough. So I suspect the population of Hinton has grown substantially over the last few years. *Social Services Employee*

I have four houses that I rent in Hinton, and it's really easy to rent in Hinton. Selling things....a lot of people are afraid of commitment in the town, because they're afraid of the resource industry, as far as being permanent or steady. *Resource Industry Employee*

Consistent with a nervous attitude toward future resource-sector development, residents express some nervousness about how future development, or possible lack of future development, will affect housing prices. In recent years, the forest sector has remained quite stable in terms of employment, despite low pulp prices. Considerable concern over Hinton's economic prospects has arisen from the looming decommissioning of the Luscar mine and the uncertain future of its proposed replacement, the Cheviot mine. Nichols Applied Management (1996) estimated that if the Cheviot mine project does not move forward, real estate prices would decline dramatically (*i.e.*, down 25% for residential property and 15% for commercial property, respectively). Although community support for industry remains strong, as the debate over future extractive activities moves onto the national and international stage, real estate values may, as they invariably do, serve notice of a disquieted resource sector.

7.5.4 Restrictive Markets

The relationship between new housing starts and prices as general indicators of regional economic health is well established. Government and industry watch the housing market closely to gain some objective measure of consumer confidence. Much of the discussion above focuses on the extent to which economic activity is positively correlated with the cost of land and housing. These economic facts are seldom debated. But to conclude the analysis of this relationship at this juncture, and not discuss other possible causes of real estate price fluctuations, would render our description of the Hinton real estate environment incomplete. In every market, certain non-market factors may play a role in setting market values. These factors might include specific municipal government policies—like Jasper, where land for new development is highly restricted—or monopoly market situations where the lack of competition distorts market values. Some residents of Hinton view government restriction on land surrounding the town as a contributing factor to high real estate values.

I don't like the fact that there is no land here at all. Housing prices are way up. It's because the government owns all the land and leases it to the plant. It's very difficult to get a piece of land from the government. *Mill Employee*

Other residents see less of a problem with government restriction and more of a problem with restrictions imposed by private developers. There is a strong perception among some residents that land values, and hence residential and commercial development values, are affected by the relatively small number of business people dominating the real estate market. From comments about the lack of options for new home buyers to the high cost of commercial property that negatively impacts would-be entrepreneurs from developing small enterprises, residents consistently return to the controversial view that real estate agents and property developers factor strongly in the current real estate price structure.

> There's a limited number of people who own land and so land prices are high and I think the high real estate prices are going to take away the long-term opportunities for stability and diversity and trying to have, be a leading-edge [community], creative people coming in because they're not going to come in. They can't afford to start a small business and this type of thing. It's already hurting a lot. ***Community Leader***
>
> My opinion is that they've had so many years where it's just been 6 or 8 or 10 people that own most of the property and buildings in town and have known everybody else who've lived here for a millennium. ***Businessperson***
>
> Those type of people or some people in real estate have a lot of pull in this town. ***Social Services Employee***

Adjusted for inflation, the value of a new home in Hinton has increased by approximately $7,400 between 1991 and 1996 (Table 7.5). Prior to 1991, the market was relatively flat for about 10 years. Although the recent rise in property values differs from the previous period, it is not inconsistent with what is happening in other parts of the Foothills Model Forest. For instance, Jasper real estate values increased a dramatic $61,900 over the same 5-year period. To what extent are the markets in Hinton controlled or manipulated internally by a few influential business people? Or is the current real estate market simply a reflection of larger economic forces in the region? This is a difficult question to assess objectively. Further analysis requires examining property ownership and control within the municipality—data that are unavailable to this study.

7.6 Jasper: Community Perspectives on Real Estate

This report, in keeping with Foothills Model Forest geography, attempts to treat the entire Foothills region as a single management unit. In doing so, we point out social and economic conditions within the Foothills Model Forest and attempt to differentiate them from what is happening in other parts of the province. We also focus on some of the specific differences between resource-dependent communities within the Model Forest. As expected, because of differences in location, public policy, and resource dependence, social and economic conditions vary, often dramatically, between communities. For example, income distribution and employment patterns are unique to each community.

Differences between Hinton and Jasper are perhaps most clearly illustrated, however, by the explosion in Jasper real estate values over the last decade. In 1997, the average price of a home in Jasper was $135,000 more than in Hinton. As Table 7.1 indicates, land values are historically high in Jasper, but the recent increase is undoubtedly unprecedented. Finding suitable shelter, paying for shelter, and capitalizing on the real estate market are at the forefront of most discussions with residents. As one resident states: "the high cost of housing brings all kinds of other issues." We organize community perspectives on real estate in Jasper into three themes: your home is your business, urban landscapes and urban values, and policy-driven development.

7.6.1 *Your Home is Your Business*

According to interviewed residents, the main factor contributing to the cost of housing in Jasper is land. The boundary of Jasper townsite is fixed, which forces all new development to take place within the boundary. Furthermore, land that is available for residential or commercial construction is leased to the land holder as a payment for the private benefit associated with the use of public lands. The average annual land lease cost and associated taxes are significant factors in the cost of shelter. To mitigate these costs, homeowners and developers seek to maximize the revenue potential of their property by developing large, often multi-storey structures. Single-family dwellings are being razed and replaced with multiple-family dwellings with one or more *home-accommodation units* available for rent to tourists or seasonal employees. The new home is not only a family dwelling but an income-generating enterprise that contributes substantially to mortgage, land rent, and taxes. For many long-term, middle-income families, this often undesirable yet unavoidable situation represents the only reasonable option in the current real estate environment.

> The extremely high cost of housing here. That would be the biggest downfall. With that comes a whole bunch of other issues; for instance, the use of housing and the need for people to make a lot of money from the property they have to make ends meet. So we have really high density. Has the increase in real estate values been a recent trend? In the last 10 years. Little two-bedroom houses are now $500,000 but to the senior citizen living in it it's still the little house they bought in the 1930s and 1940s. It's not that they are living in a big mansion. ***Social Services Employee***
>
> It's very expensive. Our taxes are going up by large percentages. Like, my children will probably never be able to own a house in Jasper. Because it is expensive, then people are moving out to get a return on their money. They are doing whatever they can within their means to get money back from their investment as they can. Like an example would be someone would buy a house, a small bungalow, $250,000 and then tear it down and build a duplex but then it would have two illegal suites in the basement so it would be a fourplex. And they would be getting you know a $1,000 rent for the two upstairs and then $650 for the two downstairs and then the lot has been maximized, the parking is on the lot, there is no room for a garden space. ***Tourism Consultant***

Driven by the rising value of land, residents are compelled to maximize the revenue potential of their property. For some of the larger home owners, this income stream amounts to thousands of dollars a month and represents a substantial contribution to one's ability to meet the rising cost of living in Jasper. It is not possible to determine from Statistics Canada data exactly what percentage of the total family income is derived from rental income, but there is a predictably clear association between the cost of owning a home and the growth in home-accommodation units.

Another factor complicating the home-accommodation business in Jasper is the high proportion of illegal home-accommodation units. Jasper National Park approves 25 new units per year, just a fraction of demand. Currently, operators of illegal suites are not prosecuted, but at any time, officials could close down these home businesses and put many families into a difficult financial situation. The lack of enforcement regarding illegal home-accommodation units adds to the risky nature of business in Jasper.

7.6.2 Urban Landscapes and Urban Values

Accompanying home-business development in Jasper is an increase in housing density in the form of cooperative housing, condominiums, and multi-storey homes—all of which are changing the face of Jasper, once marked by modest single-family bungalows in quiet neighborhoods. These high-density developments are accompanied by an increase in high-pressure, urban-like social situations that residents observe as a growing side effect of squeezing more residents into a finite space. As a rural community with less than 5,000 residents, residential Jasper maintains a distinctly non-urban flavor. It's quite easy to walk from one end of the town to the other, year-round residents acknowledge each other on the street, interact with each other at the local school and recreation facility, and eagerly await the arrival of the *shoulder season* when bank and grocery queues are much smaller. In some ways, the experience of rural community life in Jasper is not dissimilar to other communities of similar size. Recently, however, residents are facing an escalation of typically urban issues brought on by high-density housing developments. The new urban character is not limited to housing design (such as condominiums), but includes social problems often brought on by high-density development. As the push to provide additional affordable housing and to maximize home-business revenue continues, the town is faced with new issues more characteristic of urban communities than rural ones.

> The town is becoming urbanized. Urbanized in a cultural sense. Living space and social atmosphere of the community. And that urbanization is coming about because of the demand for housing. Parks policy is that we will not release any new land for residential development, so what you're having is a greater degree of what I call urbanization (building up). And that's really dictated by Parks. When I talk about my children and the next generation, they're going to come here for different reasons. They're not going to come here for the same reasons that we came here. They'll still use the park but the park will be almost a playground, not for aesthetic values. That's the way urbanized people think about parks. ***Tourism Consultant***

Probably the most controversial issue in residential Jasper is the existence of what are called *flop houses*. These houses are typically run down and overpopulated dwellings, owned by operators of commercial enterprises such as hotels and restaurants to provide accommodation for seasonal workers. The sheer number of temporary employees living in these houses creates problematic residential and social situations unavoidable by neighbors living in close proximity to the flop house. Instead of anger or frustration with the tenants, residents often express sympathy for the young employees who must endure these housing situations and instead, express frustration with the business owners who provide such poor living conditions for their employees and Parks Canada for not enforcing existing housing regulations (see also Chapter 5).

> These entrepreneurs are buying whole houses and then they are putting all their staff in a house. But they don't have anyone supervising it and there was one house in Cabin Creek that one of them bought last year and there were 44 staff kids living in that house. ***Senior Citizen***
>
> There have been seven flop houses identified in town....There are probably 30 people living in it. And it's noisy, messy, the RCMP end up there maybe twice a week. But because we're not a municipality, we don't have a set of by-laws the way they'd be able to come in and deal with it, so we're caught between a rock and a hard place in a Federal jurisdiction and yet we have all these municipal problems because we don't have any by-laws to deal with it. We also don't have any methods for good enforcement because there's a big gap. You fine somebody but as soon as it goes into the provincial court there is nothing for the judge to go on. So there's those kind of things going on. ***Community Leader***

With urbanization come urban problems requiring a regulatory framework to deal with those problems. Community leaders and law enforcement must rely on existing legislation or work to create new legislation designed to deal with emerging community issues. At present, residential development may be outstripping the community's ability to cope with and control associated community issues such as the size and density of residential developments, and laws to control social problems normally associated with urban communities.

7.6.3 *Policy-Driven Development*

The final theme addressed in this section is briefly mentioned in Sections 7.6.1 and 7.6.2. Out of genuine concern for the future of their community and the integrity of the Park ecosystem, residents repeatedly state, "we don't want to become another Banff." Debate rages about the extent to which the kind of expansion taking place in Banff is desirable or actually possible in the more geographically isolated community of Jasper. Local concern arises from recent expansions in the commercial and residential sectors of Jasper and what residents generally consider to be policy changes at Parks Canada that stimulate expansion, especially in the residential sector. From the perspective of a local businessperson, it is inaccurate to place the blame entirely on the commercial sector. The question comes back to who is driving the development of overnight accommodation in residential districts.

> There are $300,000 and $400,000 homes that were built solely because approved accommodation was going to pay the mortgage. Now is that right? So they've created a home worth that amount. That's where the housing market is. Is it business who did that or was it the people who built the homes? Those are middle-class people who looked at an opportunity. ***Hotel Manager***

The next question might be when? When did home-accommodation units become the driving force for (re)development in Jasper. If one examines the trend in tourism over the last 15 or 20 years, there is a fairly dramatic increase in the number of visitors[20] to Jasper National Park and, as all of these visitors require some services, visitor demand is an obvious driver of commercial and residential development. The other driver of development often mentioned by residents—perhaps because this driver is one that Parks Canada has more direct control over—is the increasing value of real estate. By limiting access to new land, increasing land rent, and modifying architectural parameters, the value of land and the rate of new development is directly affected. This resident mentions both visitor demand for services and the value of property as drivers of development.

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[20] The actual amount of vehicle traffic through the Park has increased 82% in the last two decades, from 663,638 in 1976 to 1,206,844 in 1996 (JNP Frontcountry Services).

> If you look at the increase in tourism back to the early 1950s, we were doing about a million people a year. Then it just started to increase when you get to about 1985, now there are over 3 million a year. And that demand, when you talk about "What is the engine?" There are lots of reasons why. One is the demand. The other part is that the value of the property is increased; therefore, the expense of owning that real estate has increased; therefore, they have to get more revenue, so the only way they can do that is to redevelop. That's the engine that's driving it. And that's the same engine that drove the major development in Banff. It's just the value of real estate, land rentals from Parks Canada. When your land rentals keep going up, and you've got a little spot, eventually you will need to expand to the boundary of the property to generate more revenue. That's one of the major reasons why you are seeing redevelopment....I think it's going to look like Patricia Street. The big houses. The people that live along here are older, retired. As those people decide to move out of the house and into other accommodation I think those houses will be sold, torn down and rebuilt. Unless the architectural guidelines are enforced. I still think it is going to be rebuilt to the max. ***Tourism Consultant***

As a home owner, this resident is responding to a Parks Canada policy that directly affects him and all other homeowners in the community. In order to pay for land rent, a growing number of residents are using their homes as a supplementary source of income, fully realizing that more home-accommodation units are one of the driving factors in the growing commercial sector (restaurants and retail stores). In the statement to follow, the relationship between overnight accommodation and town development is expressed as a policy initiative by Parks Canada.

> Land rent is really at the root of the affordability issue. Mainly because there has been a number of increases in tax and with Parks Canada, there is some uncertainty about how land rent will be calculated in the future. The new town plan won't have the authority to address that, it's more of a Parks Canada issue and not even a regional or national decision. It certainly was a concern, one of the primary concerns in the town visioning process was affordability....I think Parks is kind of focusing on overnight accommodation as the driving force for growth and development in the town. If you have more hotels and more campgrounds, home accommodations, more people spending the night in the Park, then you increase demand for associated services, restaurants, retail, stuff like that, which means more staff get hired and more residential accommodation will be needed. ***Parks Employee***

Real estate values in the Foothills Model Forest are a function of economic prosperity in the region. In addition to market conditions, policy-related conditions play a major role in the price structure of property. Because of this relatively direct link, housing prices and new housing starts are monitored closely by government and industry as a measure of current conditions and an accurate predictor of future confidence in regional economic activity. If real estate values in Jasper accurately reflect confidence in the regional economy, the message is clear. Residents remain highly confident in the future. On the other hand, rapid fluctuations in property values, both up and down, place strains on the community as they cope with changes that directly affect the well-being of residents. Policy changes, increasing tourist demand for services, income from home-accommodation units, annual fluctuating demand for accommodation, and the transformation of residential areas from rural to urban environments comprise the unique aspects of real estate as an indicator of community sustainability in Jasper.

7.7 Discussion

The real estate data for Hinton suggest generally declining housing costs for most residents. Between 1981 and 1991, the average value of a dwelling declined, the owner's major payments on housing declined, and household payments as a proportion of median income declined. All the numeric indicators point to fairly favorable conditions for homeowners in Hinton and, relative to other resource-sector communities, there is general consensus that housing values in Hinton are quite competitive. There is some indication from the narrative data that some residents are quite nervous about making long-term investments in housing, which might account for the 15% of residents living in mobile homes (Community Profile, 1998). In addition, interviewed residents believe real estate is overly restrictive because of development restrictions on local public land and the concentration of available land in the hands of a few property developers.

In Jasper, between 1981 and 1991 the cost of a dwelling was much the same as Hinton. With the exception of 1986, when housing prices were generally higher than in 1981 or 1991, dwelling costs as a proportion of income were lower. Since 1991,

however, real estate values have risen dramatically and much of the narrative data speaks of the community's attempt to manage rapid change in housing costs and the associated effects on everything from home businesses to flop houses. Jasper residents attribute recent residential and commercial development to the increase in home-accommodation units and the change in housing costs associated with increasing land rents and tax rates.

As an indicator of consumer confidence, real estate values in the Foothills Model Forest suggest strong economic activity ahead. Although this story is easily inferred from the quantitative data, narrative data suggest some concerns that should be evaluated by community leaders in light of recent and fairly dramatic changes in real estate values, especially in Jasper.

7.8 Appendix

7.8.1 Hinton: Additional Statements on Real Estate

I would think that the economic picture for Hinton is quite good and the price of land in this area is still relatively low compared to an equivalent like Banff or Canmore. ***Resource Industry Employee***

The one thing I think from a real estate value point of view that's a bit frustrating in the town of Hinton is it's a bit of a captive market. If you want to buy a house or whatever, it's really what the market will bear, there's not a lot of room to move and negotiate when you buy a house in Hinton. ***Resource Industry Employee***

The days of a house for $100,000 or even $125,000 are over. You can't get one. We bought our house in Brule about 5 years ago for $160,000. We could get over $200,000 for it now. We looked around in Hinton and when you get into town here, you get no yard at all. Well house prices are so inflated. ***Social Services Employee***

The "55ers" (people that came to Hinton around 1955) are retiring now and they are staying in the community. Their children are able to get jobs in the community so they stay. This accounts for the increase in the amount of housing in the community with little population growth. ***Medical Professional***

Back in 1981, for a two-bedroom apartment you were looking at $600.00 per month. Bringing someone from Edmonton, I really have to give them a very attractive package because they will say well I've got a two-bedroom apartment in Edmonton and I was paying $420. To come out here I'm looking at $650-700. ***Hotel Manager***

We had a kind of real estate peak in about 1982 and then there was a long trough. And I think right now we are at another one of those upswings in the cycle. Right now I think the market is overheated by about 20%. ***Educator***

Buy a house for $100,000, and now you can't even sell it. I think that's always going through people's minds.... you know what happens if the mill shuts down. And they'll shut down. For instance, if there's a strike, this town hurts bad....Same with the mines....That's always a concern. What's going on with the three mines or the four mines and the mill. It has a large impact on all the retailers here....everybody. ***Resource Industry Employee***

Well, because there's big money in town, everything's expensive. How much does it cost to rent a lot on the trailer court? $300 a month. Those buggers making six bucks an hour can't even afford that....they don't start at the bottom and ease their way up. There's very little low-cost housing in town, and that's part of the free enterprise system. Charge what the market will bear and the hell with the rest. ***Resource Industry Employee***

Most of the major residential development is going to be down in the valley in the next 4 or 5 years. It's all coming down here. The rest of the hill, there isn't going to be new development there for quite a while.

There is no more land. What land is there is already utilized. ***Businessperson***

One thing that sort of concerns me is real estate in Hinton. Just because it seems to be climbing higher and higher and we're at that breaking point where things are just going to fall down because people can't afford it anymore or someone puts a bunch of lots on the market for a half decent price. There is a potential for disaster I think almost. That's one area that Hinton as a town hasn't addressed on how it's going to open up new areas for people to live in. Right now I think they are leaving it to private developers so it's been a real closed-up market I would say. My older brother and sister tried to buy a lot and you could not buy a lot in Hinton. If you wanted a lot you had to deal with this guy and let him build your house. So that would be a concern....It's interesting to look at the inflated prices here in comparison to the amount of land that looks available around Hinton. I would think if you could get a piece of land you could build a house much cheaper than people are trying to sell you one for. ***Businessperson***

We bought a house 2 years ago. We were living in a trailer 3 years before that and an apartment when we moved here. Housing prices are just bananas. The apartments aren't as bad as housing. When we moved here we thought we'd wait to get a house because we thought the prices would come down, but they haven't. They remain ridiculously high and keep getting higher. You can't get a decent house for less than $130,000. It's bizarre. ***Businessperson***

We have had a lot of new housing built and I think a good portion of that housing is to accommodate the kids of the people who came here in the '50s for the mill. It must be. If we are not creating that many new jobs, we are not bringing that many new people into town, somebody must be buying those houses. There is a brisk market here, especially in that just under, just over $100,000 mark. ***Social Services Employee***

Real estate is expensive. At one time you could buy a house here for $10,000. When the mine went in, the price doubled to $20,000 and now the same house is worth $120,000. The houses here have city prices. **He did mention though that the service-sector wages are higher to make up for the high cost of living there.**[21] ***Medical Professional***

7.8.2 *Jasper: Additional Statements on Real Estate*

I think Parks will have to understand that they can't go charging an arm and a leg for people to live here. They can't ask for a lot of land rent as they are planning to. ***Restaurant Operator***

People look at what is best for their own circumstances. They want to live in a single detached home, they don't want any transient accommodation near them. In other words, unless you are in the approved accommodation business you don't really want 14 cars out front. It puts a certain amount of stress into the residential community. Residents prefer not to have transient staff accommodation. In other words, these buildings with 12 to 15 people in them, in their neighborhood. But there is a need for that in the community. So in the process, they have probably addressed trying to restrict some of that. I don't know how successful they will be in trying to satisfy the residents' needs overall. ***Hotel Manager***

Housing, there is supposed to be another housing co-op going in possibly this Fall. I don't think affordable housing or staff accommodation will ever keep pace with development. If you are a business and you want to develop, you have to provide a certain number of staff accommodations. So what they do is buy a house or a lot and put up a staff accommodation and rent it out. But it is not tied to the staff who work for the business. They provided the staff accommodation and then you or I are able to go rent it, even if we don't work for him. They have provided the necessary accommodation that they need to do business. I see housing and accommodation becoming more and more critical. I see it every year and it gets worse. ***Social Services Employee***

So when people refer to, "We don't want to be another Banff", it never will be another Banff. There are just factors in there that won't allow that to happen. But what I have seen in development has not been bad.

[21] Arial font denotes paraphrased statements.

The cooperative housing was a short-term solution to provide accommodation in an affordable way and that was positive for the community. It kind of threw some water onto the rising housing prices but they were rising unrealistically maybe. But you take a look at the other development. The changes to buildings, the upgrading, the little shops. It's much nicer now. ***Hotel Manager***

Government is going to want more land rent on the leases. It's going to go up. Tax is going to be 10% and then you pay provincial and school tax on top of that. I don't think people can afford it. They've got a set income and they don't have any money saved up. I don't think they can live here....A lot of people doing private home accommodation as well. ***Senior Citizen***

It's a very expensive community to live in there's no doubt about it. We are so unfair to our young people. There's no way they can buy homes in Jasper anymore. I mean you know, $200,000 to $250,000 for little homes that are little houses. What young person can put themselves in debt for 45 years buying a home when tomorrow the market could fall right out of that. Nothing says that 10 years from now the market is still going to be right up there. ***Senior Citizen***

The other big concern is house values and taxes are based on the market value. And that's not fair in a place like this and I think people have a legitimate beef there. Do you want to know what that house went for just behind here with the red roof. It's a staff house now that is kind of run down. That went for close to $300,000 and you don't even own the land. Now that's crazy. ***Senior Citizen***

I don't know if it will physically be larger but I think there will be a lot of new development only because there is still a lot of room for new development. A lot of vacant lots and a lot of room for second-storey development. So that will put pressure on things. It all depends on what happens regarding local municipal administration. How that is worked out. It depends on how the town plan treats the town boundary. The current residential reserve is this area of land called Sleepy Hollow and that has been set aside as a residential reserve area. One of the big issues is will it stay or go? If it stays, then there will definitely be an outlet for new commercial development but if it goes I think there will definitely be constraints on commercial development because the town won't be able to house the people. ***Parks Employee***

I think one other big issue is that the housing situation is just nuts. There are people living in campgrounds because they can't find a place to live. That isn't even cheap. *Social Services Employee*

There's some very wealthy people in business here who own a lot of property and have enormous influence with the government through Ottawa and locally through Parks superintendents who they cultivate and do favors for. ***Environmentalist***

Housing is an issue. I have a hard time enticing people who work in this company to come and work here because of housing. We have some apartment-type housing in town for our managers and supervisors. There's always a waiting list to get in there. If I'm talking to a potential candidate for a higher position it's hard because housing in town is expensive to rent or buy and housing here in the general staff area is not particularly great. ***Hotel Manager***

Real estate is not influenced by the Alberta economy here in Jasper as much as it is outside of the park. Parks Canada influences the prices and the markets. An example of this is that recently the prices for smaller units, such as condos, trailers, and small houses have fallen by about 20% in Jasper. One of the main reasons is that Parks was trying to address the problem of affordable accommodation so they developed a 40-unit housing co-op. The prices for these were very low, around $110,000.... a comparable house in Jasper will sell for about $250,000. With the increase of supply in the housing came a drop in the prices of other units in the town. There were no restrictions on these co-op units so anyone could buy into them no matter what their income was. It also helped to put a cap on the rising prices of housing because when a person vacates their unit they have to sell it back to the co-op at the same price that they bought it for....There is a huge demand for housing in the town but the restrictions placed on the town don't allow that demand to be met so there are higher prices and people are willing to pay them to a degree. No one wants a $300,000 house because they just can't afford the land tax or the rent on the place. ***Real Estate Agent***

I think there will be enough pressure that eventually new land will have to be opened up. It would have to be really slow though because they don't want to drop the prices and somebody's mortgage, all of a sudden you are paying $400,000 for a house that is only worth $200,000. ***Tourism Industry Employee***

Property values are a bit higher, they're not hugely higher. Maybe there are a few that buy a $400,000 house somewhere, but to buy a condominium, it's high but it's not outrageous. Other expenses are a lot lower, recreation expenses are way lower, I used to run more than a tank of gas in the car....I don't do that here. ***Tourism Consultant***

But we recognized that real problem in this town has always been housing and unless you could house the people that were going to be working here we didn't see the point of building more buildings. Parks hung on to the parking requirements so now we've got two corks in the same bottle. ***Community Leader***

One of the fears that I have is one of the things you mentioned earlier that what could happen is more and more commercial growth without recognizing the residential needs so you wind up having a working community bused in from Hinton everyday and that I think would go a long way toward ruining the community. ***Community Leader***

7.8.3 Census Tables

Table 7.1a Owned and rented dwellings, and average number of persons per dwelling, 1996

Census Divisions	Occupied dwellings	# persons in dwellings	Average # persons/HH	Owned	Percentage HH owned	Rented	Percentage HH rented
Hinton	3,435	9,945	2.9	2,410	70.2	1,025	29.8
YH 94	3,265	9,325	2.9	2,900	88.8	360	11.1
Jasper	1,545	3,935	2.5	760	49.2	790	51.1
Foothills	8,245	23,205	2.8	6,070	76.5	2,175	34.4
Edson	2,585	7,250	2.7	1,685	65.2	995	38.5
Grande Cache	1,400	4,260	3.0	940	67.1	465	33.2
Whitecourt	2,585	7,710	3.0	1,755	67.9	830	32.1
Edmonton	240,050	607,410	2.5	138,425	57.7	101,625	42.3
Alberta	979,175	2,647,110	2.7	664,165	67.8	310,300	31.7
Canada	10,820,050	28,390,685	2.6	6,877,780	63.6	3,905,145	36.1

Table 7.1b Owned and rented dwellings, and average number of persons per dwelling,1991

Census Divisions	Occupied dwellings	# persons in dwellings	Average # persons/HH	Owned	Percentage HH owned	Rented	Percentage HH rented
Hinton	3,095	8,990	2.9	2,045	66.1	1,045	33.8
YH 94	2,925	8,600	2.9	2,520	86.2	405	13.8
Jasper	1,305	3,330	2.6	640	49.0	660	50.6
Foothills	7,325	20,920	2.9	5,205	71.1	2,110	28.8
Edson	2,620	7,170	2.7	1,625	62.0	990	37.8
Grande Cache	1,200	3,710	3.1	755	62.9	450	37.5
Whitecourt	2,335	6,860	2.9	1,510	64.7	830	35.5
Edmonton	236,120	604,480	2.6	123,150	52.2	112,975	47.8
Alberta	910,390	2,484,980	2.7	581,895	63.9	324,610	35.7
Canada	10,018,270	26,731,855	2.7	6,273,030	62.6	3,718,525	37.1

Table 7.1c Owned and rented dwellings, and average number of persons per dwelling, 1986

Census Divisions	Occupied dwellings	# persons in dwellings	Average # persons/HH	Owned	Percentage HH owned	Rented	Percentage HH rented
Hinton	2,835	8,555	3.0	1,880	66.3	960	33.9
YH 94	2,670	8,125	3.0	2,250	84.3	425	15.9
Jasper**	1,430	3,465	2.4	630	44.1	800	55.9
Foothills	6,935	20,145	2.9	4,760	68.6	2,185	31.6
Edson	2,575	7,175	2.8	1,525	59.2	1,050	40.8
Grande Cache	1,035	3,425	3.3	565	54.6	475	45.9
Whitecourt	1,915	5,665	3.0	1,035	54.0	880	46.0
Edmonton	218,825	563,380	2.6	109,620	50.1	109,205	49.9
Alberta	836,125	2,310,055	2.8	516,090	61.7	316,070	37.8
Canada	8,991,670	24,773,110	2.8	5,580,880	62.1	3,368,480	37.5

Table 7.1d Owned and rented dwellings, and average number of persons per dwelling, 1981

Census Divisions	Occupied dwellings	# persons in dwellings	Average # persons/HH	Owned	Percentage HH owned	Rented	Percentage HH rented
Hinton	2,570	8,255	3.2	1,730	67.3	840	32.7
YH 94	2,885	9,110	3.2	2,375	82.3	510	17.7
Jasper	n/a						
Edson	1,905	5,715	3.0	1,205	63.3	700	36.7
Grande Cache	n/a						
Whitecourt	1,790	5,505	3.1	1,080	60.3	710	39.7
Edmonton	196,495	521,935	2.7	95,665	48.7	97,825	49.8
Alberta	758,240	2,179,345	2.9	478,215	63.1	280,025	36.9
Canada	8,281,530	23,797,375	2.9	5,141,940	62.1	3,139,590	37.9

Table 7.2 Percentage change in owned and rented dwellings, 1981–1996

	Percentage change, 1981 to 1996					
Census Divisions	Occupied dwellings	# persons in dwellings	Average # persons/HH	Owned	Rented	
Hinton	33.74	20.47	-9.4	39.31	22.02	
YH 94	13.21	2.36	-9.4	22.11	-29.41	
Jasper	8.04	13.56	8.3	20.63	-1.25	1986 to 1991
Foothills	18.89	15.2	-3.4	27.5	-0.46	
Edson	35.70	26.86	-0.1	39.83	42.14	
Grande Cache	35.27	24.38	-0.09	66.37	-2.1	1986 to 1991
Whitecourt	44.41	40.05	-0.03	62.5	16.9	
Edmonton	22.17	16.38	-0.07	44.7	3.9	
Alberta	29.14	21.46	-0.07	38.88	10.81	
Canada	30.65	19.3	-0.1	33.76	24.38	

Table 7.3a Census families in private household, 1996

Census Divisions	Ttl. # of private households	Ttl. # census families in pr. dwellings	Percentage census fam. in pr. dwellings	Ttl. # of non-family HH	Percentage non-family HH
Hinton	3,435	2,795	81	695	20
YH 94	3,265	2,615	80	695	21
Jasper	1,545	930	60	640	41
Foothills	8,245	6,340	77	2,030	27
Edson	2,685	1,980	74	735	27
Grande Cache	1,400	1,215	87	205	15
Whitecourt	2,585	2,045	79	570	22
Edmonton	240,050	163,390	68	81,945	34
Alberta	979,175	721,845	74	273,790	28
Canada	10,820,050	7,865,030	73	3,134,585	29

Table 7.3b Census families in private household, 1991

Census Divisions	Ttl. # of private households	Ttl. # census families in pr. dwellings	Percentage census fam. in pr. dwellings	Ttl. # of non-family HH	Percentage non-family HH
Hinton	3,095	2,475	80	635	21
YH 94	2,925	2,350	80	600	21
Jasper	1,305	865	66	440	34
Foothills	7,325	5,690	78	1,675	23
Edson	2,620	1,935	74	695	27
Grande Cache	1,200	1,010	84	195	16
Whitecourt	2,335	1,780	76	570	24
Edmonton	236,120	159,750	68	79,345	34
Alberta	910,390	667,985	73	251,735	28
Canada	10,018,270	7,356,170	73	2,783,040	28

Table 7.4a Number of persons in census and non-family households, 1996

Census Divisions	# census families in private HH	# of census family persons	Ave. # of persons per census family	Ttl. # of non-family persons
Hinton	2,795	9,090	3.3	860
YH 94	2,615	8,550	3.3	775
Jasper	930	2,870	3.1	1,070
Foothills	6,340	20,510	3.3	2,705
Edson	1,980	6,380	3.2	870
Grande Cache	1,215	4,030	3.3	230
Whitecourt	2,045	6,905	3.3	810
Edmonton	163,390	510,710	3.1	96,700
Alberta	721,845	2,311,430	3.2	335,675
Canada	7,865,030	24,750,615	3.1	3,640,065

Table 7.4b Number of persons in census and non-family households, 1991

Census Divisions	# census families in private HH	# of census family persons	Ave. # of persons per census family	Tt. # of non-family persons
Hinton	2,475	7,970	3.2	1,020
YH 94	2,350	7,650	3.3	945
Jasper	865	2,550	2.9	775
Foothills	5,690	18,170	3.2	2,740
Edson	1,935	6,165	3.2	1,005
Grande Cache	1,010	3,385	3.4	325
Whitecourt	1,780	5,925	3.3	940
Edmonton	159,750	484,488	3.0	119,995
Alberta	667,985	2,095,665	3.1	389,315
Canada	7,356,170	22,558,360	3.1	4,173,495

Table 7.5 Average dwelling value and payments, 1981–1996

Census Divisions	Average value of dwelling				Average major payments (monthly)				Average gross rent (monthly)			
	1996	1991	1986	1981	1996	1991	1986	1981	1996	1991	1986	1981
Hinton	111,949	104,551	100,480	146,383	786	750	944	952	570	568	713	860
YH 94	105,245	87,158	84,592	129,920	582	540	532	644	444	525	489	559
Jasper	225,783	163,899	142,210	187,820	809	612	793	641	650	614	790	775
Foothills	130,962	107,613	101,280	147,174	710	771	641	773	536	559	637	724
Edson	87,329	82,445	88,606	128,783	710	751	794	794	526	576	672	751
Grande Cache	92,762	77,892	73,449	114,709	673	724	889	940	595	593	765	786
Whitecourt	102,938	96,185	87,382	132,596	840	784	799	908	611	583	698	724
Edmonton	126,605	127,425	118,018	182,941	734	751	785	842	532	601	682	743
Alberta	126,979	122,795	114,724	168,603	738	769	817	868	555	611	682	727
Canada	147877	154,834	114,575	132,397	754	759	675	687	595	622	622	564

Values adjusted to 1996 real dollar amount, using an inflation factor of 1.072 = (CPI(1996)/CPI(1991)), 1.26 = (CPI(1996)/CPI(1986)),and 1.67 = (CPI(1996)/CPI(1981)). Values for Foothills were weighted according to the number of dwellings in Hinton (0.4225), I.D. 14 (0.3993), and I.D. 12 (.1781).

Table 7.6 Change in average dwelling value and payments, 1981–1996

Census Divisions	Percent change over 5 years								
	Value of dwelling			Owner's major payement			Gross rent		
	1981-86	1986-91	1991-96	1981-86	1986-91	1991-96	1981-86	1986-91	1991-96
Hinton	-31.4	4.1	7.1	-0.9	-20.5	4.8	-17.0	-20.3	0.3
YH 94	-34.9	3.0	20.8	-17.4	1.5	7.8	-12.5	7.4	-15
Jasper	-24.3	15.3	37.8	23.7	-22.8	32.2	1.9	-22.3	6
Foothills	-31.2	5.9	21.7	-17	16.0	-7.9	-11.8	16.8	-4.1
Edson	-31.2	-7.0	5.9	-0.1	-5.4	-5.4	-10.5	-14.4	-9.1
Grande Cache	-36.0	6.0	19.1	-5.4	-18.6	-7	-2.6	-22.6	0.3
Whitecourt	-34.1	10.1	7	-12.1	-1.8	7.1	-3.4	-16.5	5.2
Edmonton	-35.5	8.0	-1.1	-6.7	-4.2	-2.2	-8.2	-11.8	-1.1
Alberta	-32.0	7.0	3.4	-5.9	-5.9	-4	-6.2	-10.4	-9.1
Canada	-13.5	35.1	-4.4	-1.8	12.4	-0.7	10.2	0.1	-4.3

Table 7.7 Household payments as a proportion of median income, 1981–1996

Census Divisions	Major payments as a proportion of median income				Gross Rent as a proportion of median income			
	1996	1991	1986	1981	1996	1991	1986	1981
Hinton	16.3	15.8	19.8	21.7	11.8	12.0	14.9	19.6
YH 94	16.7	16.4	17.7	20.8	12.8	15.9	16.3	18.0
Jasper	19.3	14.6	21.5	17.3	15.5	14.6	21.4	21.0
Foothills	17	15.8	19.2	20.5	12.9	14.0	16.6	19.2
Edson	15.2	18.8	21.3	20.5	15.2	14.4	18.1	19.3
Grande Cache	11.5	14.7	19.0	21.0	11.5	12.1	16.3	17.5
Whitecourt	12.9	17.9	21.6	23.7	12.9	13.4	18.9	18.9
Edmonton	22.8	22.2	23.0	23.1	16.6	17.7	20.0	20.4
Alberta	20.7	21.3	23.0	23.7	15.6	17.0	19.2	19.8
Canada	22.5	21.8	20.4	21.6	17.8	17.8	18.7	18

Chapter 8.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Discussion

Attempts to quantify, assess, and monitor sustainability indicators at the spatial level of geographically defined human communities are relatively new. As well, there is far from anything resembling a consensus regarding how to measure the broad concept of community sustainability (Beckley and Burkosky 1999). There does exist a quarter century of research in quality of life studies that takes a social-indicators approach to measuring social well-being. This research is often comparative and examines aggregate and average conditions at various levels of analysis in various jurisdictions. Using social indicators allows one to make judgements that certain places are doing better or worse, in a relative sense, than other places. Much of the recent work on well-being and community sustainability takes such a comparative approach. This work is no exception. Data are presented so that readers may compare the experience of and conditions in three census subdivisions, Hinton, Jasper, and YH94. At times, an aggregate picture of the Foothills jurisdictions is calculated. And frequently, we present provincial or national averages for comparison as well. At best, the indicators readily available through census data only allow us to scratch the surface of the concept of community sustainability. There are numerous difficulties or challenges inherent in any attempt to measure well-being or sustainability for human communities and it is important to understand these in order to highlight the limitations of the findings presented in this report.

First, human communities are not detached or distinct from nature. As removed as urban environments may seem from natural processes, places such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, as well as Jasper and Hinton, all depend upon photosynthesis, solar radiation, historic and geological processes of fossil-fuel creation, and hydrological and nutrient cycles for their very survival. Major disruptions to any of these natural processes would result in dire consequences for all human communities. Nevertheless, we have a difficult time making the connections between our reliance on nature and our material well-being. We can see the simplest relationships clearly, between resource extraction and wealth creation, for example. But it is more difficult to understand the long-term interactions between variables such as harvest and regeneration rates, changes in species composition, increasing or declining productivity of natural systems and the socio-economic variables described in this report related to community sustainability. To a large degree, the indicators reviewed here are indicative only of those simple interactions between resource extraction or non-extractive resource use and wealth creation (without fully accounting for social and economic costs). It is important to bear in mind the larger connections, even though our understanding of them is embryonic.

Second, human communities are not detached or distinct from larger human systems. Indeed, how often does a day go by when one does not see or hear a reference to globalization? The communities of the Foothills Model Forest, Hinton, Jasper, and YH94 are inextricably connected to myriad other human institutions, many of which have tremendous bearing on the well-being and sustainability of our study communities. Commodity markets and visitor services markets that span the globe, and provincial and federal government agencies immediately come to mind as exogenous human institutions that affect quality of life in the Foothills communities, but there are many others as well. The point here is that our measures of community sustainability have more to do with comparing our local jurisdictions to the larger society. If that larger society is not sustainable, then, in the long run, the Foothills communities, as they are currently configured, will not be sustainable either. As it is well beyond the scope of this work to assess the sustainability of the larger Canadian society and the global system of which it is a part, this work represents a partial view of one piece of a much larger puzzle.

There are other limitations that prevent us from making definitive determinations on community sustainability at the local level. Among these are data availability and our understanding of the interactions between variables. In a "perfect world" (from a purely research perspective), we would have 100% of the data we needed on all the variables that mattered. Furthermore, we would have 100% understanding of the interactions between all those variables. We could develop perfect models for interactions between human systems and natural systems, between current commodity markets and future inventions and product innovation, between human values and preferences for resource use and public policy related to resource use. If such conditions existed, we could quantify everything, scale everything, and this report would be able to

inform readers that, on the Community Sustainability Index, ranging from zero to one, Hinton scored .67, Jasper scored .58, and YH94 scored .62. Such is not the nature of the world we currently occupy. Given the limits of our intellectual capabilities (help from the microchip notwithstanding), a "perfect world" would necessarily be a simple world, and probably not a very interesting one to live in. The complexity of our world makes assessment and, therefore, prediction of sustainability most problematic.

There are a number of things that we can do. First, we can identify trends and, although these involve value judgements, we can identify whether we believe the directions of trends to be positive or negative. Take poverty for example. Most would agree in principle, that increasing poverty is a negative trend, regardless of jurisdiction. If increasing poverty for the majority means increasing wealth for a minority, however, that minority may give lip service to poverty reduction, but may not wish to reform the system so that more equitable distribution of wealth results. The dominant ideology in Western democracies and the dominant political strategy for "managing" the economy for the last several centuries has been to "make the pie larger." That is, to increase the size of the economy and alleviate poverty through rapid wealth creation and a "trickling down" of wealth to those on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. This strategy has been employed from municipalities on up to nation states. Unfortunately, world population has grown faster than the economy, and we have failed to distribute wealth as successfully as we have created it. From a global perspective then, this strategy has failed. As well, try as they might, nation-states or clusters of nation-states are no longer able to "manage" economies very effectively given current trade policies and the global nature of the economy. Nevertheless, for any given indicator, at the local level, directions for desired trends are usually easy to identify. We would like to see less poverty, higher educational attainment, stable or growing incomes and "fair" income distribution, moderate increases or stability in population levels and real estate prices, and low unemployment.

By identifying baselines and periodically reassessing the data, we can make two types of useful comparisons. We can make useful judgements on the relative well-being of the Foothills communities across time, comparing, for example, conditions in Hinton in 1981 to conditions in Hinton in 1996. As well, we can make comparisons of our variables of interest across space, contrasting variables for our Foothills communities to provincial and national averages.

It is important to understand that the variables we chose are more "profile" variables than "process" variables. That is, they are descriptive or symptomatic rather than explanatory and causal. Recall the previous discussion about our lack of understanding and our lack of modeling capability between natural processes and human well-being. It could be that socio-economic indicators may continue to rise for awhile even if forest health and the productive capacity of forests is in decline. Figure 8.1 represents a purely hypothetical relationship where a downturn in socio-economic well-being could lag perhaps as much as a decade or two behind slow declines in forest health and productivity. It is entirely plausible, and some argue probable, that current "well-being," as measured by variables such as the ones we review in this report, is being maximized at the expense of the well-being of future generations. As we do not have data from the future, we can not make a definitive judgement on this. The best we can do is to observe trends, monitor change, and develop hypotheses for better understanding the relationship between "outcome" variables, such as those reported here, and causal variables. We will comment more on those causal variables in a moment. On the other hand, we are constantly discovering or recognizing new ways that the forest provides value to humans, through new uses, such as the forest-based recreation that has blossomed in the last three decades, to value-added production, to more efficient production, to existence values, and values of ecosystem functions (biodiversity, carbon sequestering, etc.). Figure 8.2 illustrates the hypothetical relationship between the growing value of forests to humans, and human attempts to optimize the full potential of all forest resources. To the extent to which there is unutilized potential in forest or other resources to provide value to humans, there is potential to increase well-being through smarter and more efficient use of those resources.

The approach we have taken here has been to report on variables that are readily available in secondary data. With one or two exceptions, the variables we chose to examine are widely recognized in the literature on community sustainability (Beckley and Burkosky 1999). Our conclusions are tempered by the fact that we can only speak in relative, not absolute, terms, for the reasons listed above. Nonetheless, there are important trends that we discovered in our analysis that do pertain to the sustainability of the study communities. These are reviewed briefly below.

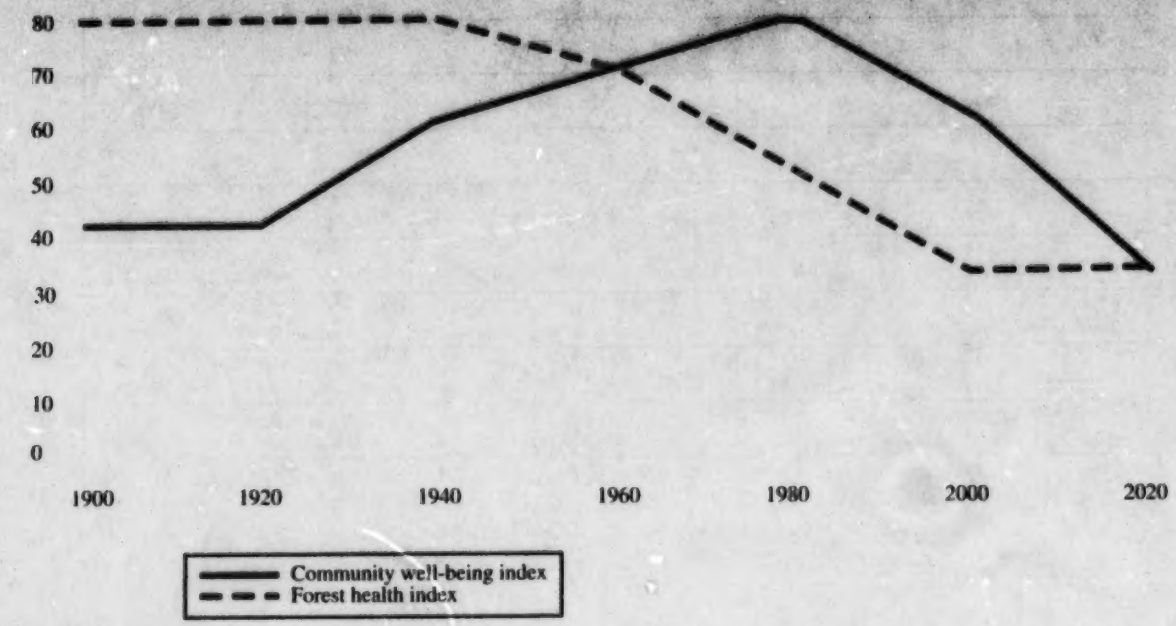

Figure 8.1 Hypothetical relationship between community and forest health.

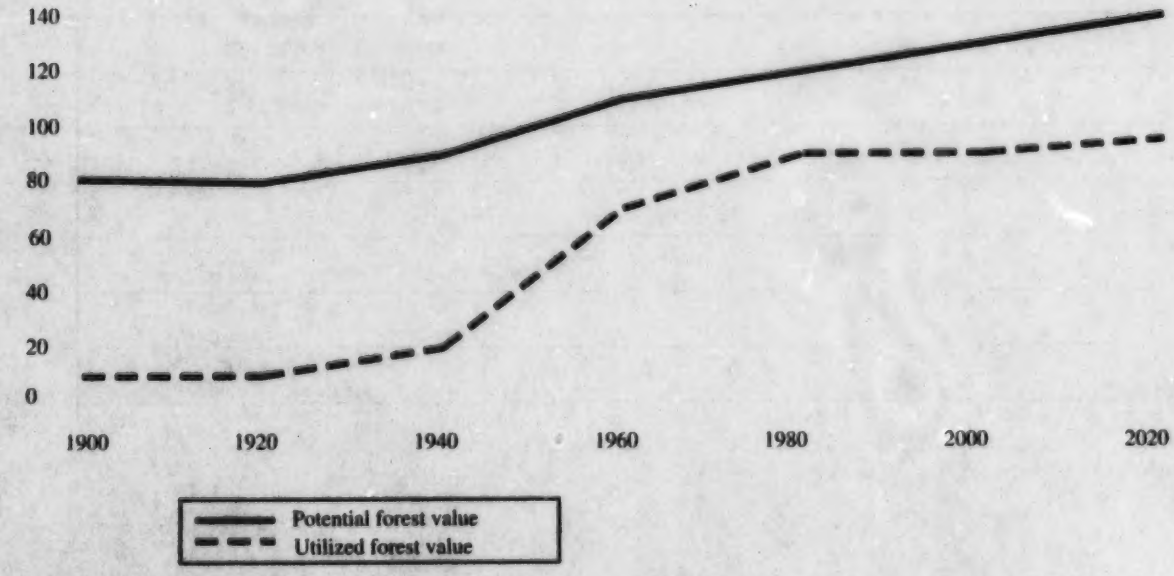

Figure 8.2 Actual and potential contribution of forests to well-being.

8.1.1 Population and Migration

The town of Hinton has experienced rapid growth over the past 35 years and growth in Hinton accounts for most of the growth in the Model Forest area as a whole. Whether Hinton's growth is within the bounds of "sustainable growth" is a subjective assessment as acceptable population growth rates are not defined. Most of Hinton's growth has been due to in-migration, as is the case in many newly industrialized towns. Jasper and YH94 have demonstrated much greater population stability over the same period, in terms of overall population levels.

Jasper and Hinton both experience fairly high population turnover for rural places. Over a quarter of Hinton residents and a third of Jasper residents migrated in the 5 years prior to 1996. These rates are considerably higher than rates in Edmonton, in Alberta, and in Canada. High turnover rates make social stability, integration into the community, and adequate service provision problematic.

Another unique population characteristic of Hinton and Jasper is the relative youthfulness of these communities. Most of the people who have moved to these communities in recent decades were in their early working years. Whether they stay once they reach retirement age remains to be seen, though qualitative interviews suggest that the aging of the population is becoming apparent. This trend will affect all of Canada with the imminent retirement of millions of baby boomers, but it may affect places like Jasper and Hinton even more dramatically, given that they have had proportionately smaller populations of seniors in the past.

8.1.2 Employment

The most dramatic trends in employment are the historic extremes in female labor-force participation. YH94 has experienced extremely low female labor-force participation rates, while Jasper's rates have been well above provincial averages. In recent reporting periods, the trends for these two jurisdictions have begun to converge toward the mean. Male labor-force participation rates are higher in Jasper and Hinton than the provincial average, but closer to provincial averages than the rates for females.

There exists in Hinton a distinct division of labor according to sex, with males completely dominating the high-wage sectors of resource industries, transportation, and construction. Females, on the other hand, are disproportionately represented in the services sector, which typically pays lower wages. There are significant earnings implications to this fact. There is also a distinct relationship between sex and participation in full- or part-time work in Hinton. Males are disproportionately involved in full-time work and females in part-time work.

8.1.3 Income Distribution

Foothills Model Forest communities are performing extremely well compared to provincial and national averages at the household level (median) for income earning. Income distribution is another story, particularly in Hinton. Hinton has a bi-modal distribution. That is, among individual earners, there are more high earners and low earners than middle-income earners. Furthermore, there is also a gendered dimension to the bi-modal income distribution in Hinton. Women are more likely to work part-time and in low-wage sectors, and men are more likely to work full-time and in high-wage sectors. The relatively high marriage rate (including common law) mitigates the impact of the gendered income gap. Still, the qualitative data confirmed that Hinton is a community of "haves" and "have-nots". The averages conceal a considerable gap between those two distinct population segments.

In comparison, Jasper's income distribution resembles the provincial average. However, there is a larger proportion of unattached individuals in Jasper, which means there is likely less pooling of resources at the household level. Although the income gap between sexes is smaller in Jasper than Hinton, there is a lower proportion of women co-habitating with higher earning males. It should also be noted that those women in Hinton who are attached to higher earning males are highly dependent on those males for their financial well-being.

8.1.4 Poverty

All three Foothills jurisdictions perform better on poverty statistics than Edmonton and Alberta as a whole, with the exception of Jasper's unattached individuals, for whom the rates are close to urban rates in Edmonton. There have been

significant jumps in poverty rates for unattached individuals in Hinton and Jasper in the last reporting period. Poverty is likely lower in these jurisdictions than in other rural or even urban places because poverty is a condition that is "exported" from Foothills Model Forest communities to jurisdictions with lower costs of living and better services for the poor and unemployed. This idea was confirmed time and time again in the narrative interviews. Many social-service employees and community leaders noted that poor in-migrants do not linger more than a year or two if they do not find well-paid work. This explains, in part, the high transience levels in Jasper and Hinton. But it also means that poverty is a difficult issue to tackle in these places because there is considerable movement in and out of the communities of disadvantaged families and individuals. That fact notwithstanding, there is a long-term, resident poor segment in each community that many suggested are "invisible" and poorly serviced. We in no way wish to belittle the family and youth poverty that does exist in Jasper, but a higher proportion of poverty in that community is likely "voluntary" and temporary. That is, the nature of the community and the recreation amenities it affords, mean that it attracts people who are willing to sacrifice income earning for the opportunity to live and recreate there. Some stay, but many leave, after a time. It is impossible to tell whether their economic conditions improve once they move, but it is not unrealistic to expect that they might.

8.1.5 Human Capital

Part of the reason that poor out-migrants from Jasper may fare better in a more diversified economy is that Jasper residents are extremely well educated, compared with provincial and national averages. Over 50% of the population has some university or some post-secondary training. The fact that this does not translate into higher earnings, speaks to the drawing power of the natural amenities and the intangible aspects of quality of life in the community. People are willing to forego considerable earning potential in order to be there, at least for a time.

Hinton performs better than the province as a whole at the "low" end of the educational attainment ladder. That is, they have higher high-school graduation rates and a higher percentage that have completed grade 9. At the "high" end of the educational attainment ladder, Hinton does less well than the province as a whole. This is undoubtably due to historic opportunities to obtain high-wage employment in the mills and mines with relatively low educational requirements.

Educational attainment increased significantly for both communities over the 15 years for which we examined data.

8.1.6 Real Estate

The rapid rise in real estate values in Jasper may well be nearing crisis proportions. In general, community boosters and resident property owners would consider rising real estate values to be a good thing, beneficial to local residents. However, incomes in Jasper are not keeping up with the value of land. Taxes and land rent may soon begin to force fixed- and low-income residents out of the community, with great potential to change the composition of the community. There is a contradiction here, in that Jasper's economy is built on numerous seasonal, low-wage, service-sector jobs. If current trends continue, these workers will no longer be able to afford to live in Jasper, and their next closest alternatives are in McBride and Hinton, both over 75 km away. Currently, over 50% of the dwellings in Jasper are rented. Add to that the high number of homes that have been or are being converted to accommodate additional short-term residents and you have, in Jasper, a very unique situation, one that is difficult to consider sustainable.

Hinton and YH94 have much higher proportions of owner-occupied dwellings than Jasper, and real estate values there are approaching 1981 levels. Home values came down significantly during the recession in the early 1980s, but that trend was characteristic across the entire province. Real estate values in Hinton and YH94 have been stable but many acknowledge that they are vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations and the health of the local resource industries. Uncertainty over the Cheviot coal mine has focused some attention on real estate values and the vulnerability of these communities in this regard.

8.2 Conclusion

The detailed descriptions of the variables that we profile within the body of this report should provide the reader with in-depth perspectives on socio-economic conditions in the study communities and in the Foothills Model Forest region as a whole. The qualitative data add a tremendous amount of context and understanding to the secondary, statistical profiles. The three jurisdictions that comprise the bulk of this analysis, Hinton, Jasper, and the surrounding rural region (YH94), are quite distinct. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize findings to the Model Forest as a whole. We are more comfortable treating each jurisdiction independently.

Although we believe this profile and trend data will be of interest and use to community leaders, resource managers, social service workers, and policy makers in the Foothills region and in the province, we feel that this work is just a beginning. Future work on community sustainability needs to extend in two directions. First, we need to develop explicit mechanisms to examine the relationship between resource use and socio-economic well-being. If the hypothesized relationship in Figure 8.1 is accurate, the relatively rosy picture presented in this profile could be short-lived. If Figure 8.2 is accurate, additional value could be extracted from the forest to contribute to human well-being. To date, research streams in socio-economics and in forest health for the Foothills region have occurred in isolation. We need to merge these streams of research and attempt to model interactions between them. Proposed efforts in the area of "green" or full-cost, or natural-resource accounting are a good place to start, but we need to go beyond that to incorporate other social variables as well.

In addition to studying the links between human communities and natural ecosystems, we need to examine "process" indicators related to community sustainability. "Process" indicators are variables on the social and organizational side of the ledger that determine, or contribute, in a causal way, to community sustainability. Among these variables are things like the quality of leadership, levels of volunteerism, the breadth of the leadership base, and attachment or commitment to place. Some of these issues were touched upon in the chapter on human capital. Do the Foothills Model Forest communities possess the collective skills and community capacity to effect positive change for their communities? To what degree does community cohesion or community division exist in these places? What sort of social networks exist? How much social capital exists and how is it distributed throughout the communities? To what degree are residents attached to these places? This is especially relevant given the short (modern) history of these places, and the high level of transience among the population. The Foothills Model Forest region has enjoyed a 35-year period of sustained growth. If there were a localized economic downturn would the two-thirds of the populations of these places that are stable be willing to stick it out, and fight, and create new economic opportunities where they currently live? Or would they cut their losses and flee to the next promising resource boom town?

These are questions not easily answered with secondary data and statistics. They are variables that are not inherently quantifiable and, therefore, they are very difficult to model. Nonetheless, these variables are much more likely to explain, not merely the persistence of these places—few communities become true ghost towns these days—but whether they will thrive and be dynamic, adaptable, nurturing, stimulating places to live, work, and raise families. Currently, both the secondary and primary data suggest that Jasper, Hinton, and YH94 are quite nice places to live. The communities are quite different, and they face different challenges. Hinton's main challenge is in diversifying the economy in a manner that maintains the high income levels to which people have become accustomed. Hinton is already diversifying. The question is, how fast, in what directions, and the degree to which it is diversifying into other high-wage versus low-wage sectors. Jasper's main challenges have to do with growth control, service provision for a transient population, and maintaining the character of the community in the face of rapid tourism and business development. YH94 is more reflective of typical, dispersed, rural communities. It has higher family poverty than Hinton and Jasper, but fewer unattached individuals in poverty. It demonstrates the least amount of change in most variables.

Although these communities are not without their problems, those who continue to live there appear to be mostly satisfied with their quality of life. Contrary to much of the literature on resource-dependent communities relative to other types of communities, the Foothills study communities have enjoyed sustained growth in employment, population, and educational attainment over the study period. These and the other variables studied should be monitored following subsequent census years to continue to track the fortunes of these communities.

Chapter 9.
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